DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 509 EA 020 969

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TITLE School-Based Management.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 89
CONTRACT OERI-R-86-0003
NOTE 28p.; In "School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence" (EA 020 964). For first edition, see ED 209 736.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; *Decentralization; Elementary Secondary Education; *Governance; *Institutional Autonomy; Participative Decision Making; *School Based Management; State Action
IDENTIFIERS *California; Colorado; *Florida; Massachusetts; Oregon

ABSTRACT

Chapter 5 of a revised volume on school leadership, this chapter presents the case for school-based management, stressing the principal's central role. In site management, the school is the primary decision-making unit. Decisions concerning expenditures, curricula, and personnel are made by school site staff, with help from parents, students, and community members. Although the school board continues to formulate and define the district's policies and educational objectives, the central office role is altered from "dictator" to "facilitator" of individual schools' actions. School-based management tackles educational administration's highly bureaucratic structure by balancing decentralization and centralization, or autonomy and control. The development of school-based management in Florida and California districts is outlined. Three other systems, in Florida, Massachusetts, and Colorado are analyzed. New interrelationships among the school board, the central office, and the principal in school-based systems are discussed, along with three critical control areas (curriculum, personnel, and budget). Finally, the benefits of shared decision-making imparted by staff and community input and school-based management councils are outlined. (MLH)

Chapter 5

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School-based management is a system of administration in which the school is the primary unit of educational decision-making. It differs from most current forms of school district organization in which the central office dominates the decision-making process.

Each school is a relatively autonomous unit in districts utilizing school-based management. Decisions concerning expenditures, curricula, and personnel are made by school-site personnel with the participation of parents, students, and members of the community. The school board continues to formulate and define the district's general policies and educational objectives. The role of the central office, however, is altered from that of "dictator" of individual schools' actions to that of "facilitator" of those actions.

This chapter presents the case for school-based management as put forth by its proponents, with particular attention given to the key role of the principal in such a management system. Because school-based management is a response to what many educators perceive as an overcentralization of power within school districts, these pages necessarily contain criticisms of the centralized administration systems most districts now employ.

The concept of site management has great promise and has proved successful in numerous districts where it has been implemented. In the following pages, the school-based management concept is examined in detail. The rationale of decentralized management is reviewed, and several school systems that have successfully implemented school-based management are described. The key role of the principal is discussed, along with the complementary role of the central office. Next the school site's control over curriculum, personnel, and budget matters is examined, followed by a review of the roles of the staff and community in the decision-making process.

The Rationale

In many districts the administration of education has been centralized to the point of diminishing returns, say critics. A new balance of decentralization and centralization—autonomy and control—needs to be struck. By reassigning a good deal of decision-making authority to the school-site, school-based management can redress the current overemphasis on centraliza-

tion and control.

In this section, the history of American education is briefly examined to determine how school districts became so centralized in the first place. The deficiencies of this overcentralization are outlined, followed by the merits of decentralization to the building level.

Autonomy and Control Through History

To gain perspective on the current interest in school-based management, it is useful to examine the history of the centralization-decentralization debate, not only in education but in society in general.

For as long as governments have existed, there has been a tug-of-war between the concepts of autonomy and control. Indeed, Amitai Etzioni attributes the failures of both past empires and contemporary organizations to an inability "to locate a productive balance between autonomy and control" (quoted by Luvern Cunningham). It is really no surprise then that educators have not yet found the perfect blend of freedom and form.

Prior to 1900, complete local control of schools was commonplace. Authority was placed in the hands of local boards of education who determined curriculum, hired personnel, purchased materials, and controlled the maintenance and utilities of buildings. The principal was a key member of the authority structure. "Up until about 1920," states Paul L. Houts, "the principal possessed near total autonomy," including authority for "teacher selection, placement, promotion, and salaries."

School management during that period, however, cannot be characterized as a "perfect" system. Members of the board of education became important politicians, and jobs in the school system were often granted as special favors. Bribery and kickbacks were also common. In short, state Harvey J. Tucker and L. Harmon Zeigler, "school politics, like the machine politics of the urban area of which it was a part, provided responsiveness *and* corruption." The response of public school reformers was to "depoliticize" education by hiring nonpartisan, professional educators to manage school systems.

The public's desire for change became part of a far greater movement at the turn of the century—the coming of the industrial age. For public education, this meant sweeping reforms to increase standardization and centralization, and a new emphasis on rote learning and obedience. "Schools were perceived as factories," states Carl Marburger, "with students the products that came out at the end of the assembly line." Management became "top-down," with layers of managers to supervise activities and quality control.

Between 1920 and 1970, the management of education became increasingly centralized and insulated from community politics. As districts grew larger, school boards became smaller, and the representative governance of the lay boards slowly melted away. As the reform movement progressed, the new central school boards transformed superintendents from clerks into major policy-makers. The autonomy of the building principal slowly eroded, so that

the principals and not the superintendent became viewed as the "clerks." School boards and superintendents relinquished principals' powers in collective negotiations with teachers' unions, often with little or no consultation with principals.

Sometime in the last decade or two, the swing of the pendulum apparently reached its limit, and some school systems have moved toward a less centralized system of governance. Community involvement, decentralization, diversity, shared governance, and school-based management are the key words of this new reform movement. For the principal, this new movement may well mean a return to a true leadership role.

The Deficiencies of Centralization

Strong arguments against centralization are continually made by leading educational specialists. John Gasson, for example, has this view of the status quo:

> The central office hierarchy regards the school principal as an agent of the superintendent. The principal may ostensibly run the school, but in reality he acts as a vehicle to transmit and implement edicts from the office. As a result, the principal and his teachers have become cogs fixed into a large, impersonal machine that depends on the machinist (superintendent) to keep every cog uniformly lubricated.

Centralized educational management, states Lawrence C. Pierce, operates on the premise "that education is a science and that with enough information, educational professionals can agree on the best school program for all children." Although these programs are designed with good intentions, their implementation can result in required uniformity and an intolerance for difference. The special needs of individuals and minority groups are often overlooked when programs are designed for the "mythical average" of the majority.

A rigid, hierarchical structure extending from central office to classroom, critics say, does little to foster innovation and creativity, which require a flexible and supportive atmosphere. "Inflexible bureaucratic structures," states Houts, "can often serve as the best inoculation against individuality and originality."

The above criticisms suggest that the "large-scale industrial bureaucracy" model of management has been overapplied to the field of education. In *A Place Called School*, John I. Goodlad notes how public criticism is often focused more on our system of schooling than on the schools themselves. This may be part of a "general decline of faith in our institutions and especially the bureaucratic insensitivity they are perceived to represent."

According to Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, today's best-run American companies realize that overcentralization and strict regulations can strangle productivity. In business and industry, successful organization is

now characterized by simple form and a minimum number of administrative levels. Clear lines of communication and open opportunities for innovation can generate positive working attitudes and "professional excellence" previously thought impossible.

The Efficiency of Decentralization

Critics of school-based management often claim that granting authority to administrators at the building level will lead to a decline of accountability and the loss of academic and budgetary control from the central office. Proponents of school-based management respond that school principals and staff are ready and willing to accept the authority and responsibility.

Goodlad found that both "principals and teachers concurred in the desire for a rebalancing of power toward greater decentralization and localism." As a guiding principle, Goodlad believes that "the school must become largely self-directing." The instigation of change should originate and be formed within the school itself, instead of being mandated or planned by authorities outside the school.

Goodlad does not, however, visualize decentralization as "schools cut loose." Each school would remain linked to the district office, as if a hub, and to each other as an interacting network. The important change is that decisions concerning the welfare of the students would be made at the school, not at the hub. The principal could be visualized as the captain of a ship, with complete responsibility and authority.

Many superintendents and principals believe that the eight guiding principles presented in Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* should be applied directly to educational management. These principles stress the importance of moving authority "down the line," to place decision-making as close to the customer as possible. Central administration should be characterized by "simple form" and "lean staff," necessitating close contact with all other levels. The final principle involves the achievement of "simultaneous loose-tight" control. Although the best-run companies offer a great deal of autonomy to lower-level personnel, their people realize the responsibility that comes with authority. Autonomy and a sense of ownership can be powerful incentives for employees to achieve, but "tight" control is imposed if there is a breach of trust or expectations are not reached.

According to Peters and Waterman, "autonomy is a product of discipline. The discipline (a few shared values) provides the framework. It gives people confidence (to experiment, for instance) stemming from stable expectations about what really counts." In a school system, a policy of "loose-tight" control allows the central office to stress academic and budgetary goals without inhibiting the creative ideas and plans of those closest to the students.

Advocates of centralization and consolidation of school districts also claim that such actions reduce the cost of education and thus increase its "ef-

ficiency." Goodlad, Pierce, and others have criticized this definition of efficiency because it takes only dollars into account.

Goodlad's proposals allow "schools to take on individual, even alternative characteristics within a frame-work designed to ensure some accountability, the cost savings associated with the centralization of some but not all budgeting and other routines. and considerable equity." By allowing individual schools to develop their own long-term plans, the central office could retain its system of "checks and balances as well as the possibilities for unleashing the creative energies of concerned principals and teachers who now feel overly constrained by 'the system'."

Pierce believes educational efficiency should be defined "in terms of matching available resources with the educational needs of children in schools." Thus, centralized administration, geared to providing uniform services, is efficient only if the needs of its clients are uniform. "If they are different," states Pierce, "then centralized provision may be inefficient." As an alternative, decentralized administration can be much more flexible, matching educational services with the changing needs of students and parents. The encouragement of school program diversity can lead to "equality of educational outcomes rather than inputs."

School-based management also allows parents and students a larger "voice" in education. A parallel objective, districtwide open enrollment plans, would provide greater "choice." As schools gain more freedom from centrally mandated philosophies, they tend to diverge in their approaches to education. Open enrollment plans, if administered in such a way as to preserve racial and socioeconomic balance, could provide the consumers of public education with the long-awaited ideals of diversity and choice.

Examples of Implementation to Date

The most accurate information concerning the advantages and structure of school-based management can be found by observing systems currently in operation. Information for this section was obtained through both written sources and telephone interviews with superintendents and principals in seven districts nationwide.

In Florida and California, where state legislation encourages or requires the decentralization of some aspects of school management, new systems have been implemented as part of a broad educational reform. We outline the development of school-based management in Florida and California, looking closely at two districts in each state. In other districts throughout the United States and Canada, school-based management has been institutionalized without the provocation of state legislation. We review the progress of systems in Lunenburg (Massachusetts), Cherry Creek School District (Colorado), and the Portland School District (Oregon).

Florida

In the early 1970s, Florida's legislature passed a series of acts designed to transfer decision-making authority to the school site. This legislation was part of a broader legislative reform of state education and school finance that took place in the late 1960s. The legislative acts set "guidelines for educational accountability, comprehensive planning, annual progress reports, school advisory committees, and a comprehensive information, accounting, and reporting system," states the National Urban Coalition. In 1979, local school committees began to receive state funding. Although Florida's acts and measures did not "mandate specifically that decision-making be decentralized to the school level," as Pierce notes, they did significantly prune the state education codes to facilitate local control.

The implementation of school-based management in Florida has been uneven, despite the legislative mandates and the state funding. The Monroe County School District—reviewed below along with the Martin County system—remains one of the few shining examples of school-based management in the United States, whereas most of the rest of the state's school districts still move slowly toward decentralized decision-making.

Even though the implementation of school-based management has had only scattered success in Florida, the state is probably the furthest along of any in implementing the system. "School site management is most often talked about in those states that have either large, diverse school districts or a highly centralized state school system," said Pierce in an interview. In Florida, the sixty-seven school districts are county based. Thus, within one county there can be a wide range of communities that have very different educational needs. The weaknesses of centralization come to the fore in systems, such as Florida's, where the diversity within one district can be great.

School-based management began in Florida—as it has elsewhere—not as a grassroots movement, but as a reform movement promoted by legislative policy-makers, said Pierce. Where it has been successful or partially successful—as in Monroe and Martin counties—it has been so because of a superintendent who strongly believes in the concept. As is often the case, it takes a great deal of energy and persuasion to break down people's conceptions of what can or should be.

Monroe County

Monroe County (1988-89 enrollment about 7,860) is composed of a long chain of islands stretching over one hundred miles from the Florida mainland into the Gulf of Mexico. Between 1971 and 1976, the school district moved from a centralized to a school-based management system because of state reform legislation and the unique geography of the county.

Armando Henriquez, the superintendent of Monroe County School District since 1969, has been a major factor in the successful implementation of school-based management in that district.

Together with the central office staff and principals, Henriquez decided to implement a system of school-based management after three years of centralized mandates had not significantly improved education in the district. Starting in the 1972-73 school year, principals were elevated from middle management to top management, and the district shifted its training emphasis from central office personnel to building personnel. In the first year, principals spent more than eighty days outside of their buildings undergoing extensive training in team management and decision-making skills. Over a period of five years, school-based management principles were phased in slowly. Four of the state's colleges collaborated in the development activities, and grants were received from the National Institute of Education and the Florida Department of Education.

In the Monroe County system, funds are allocated to schools according to number of students and special school needs. Each school decides how it will spend its funds and what its educational goals will be.

The schools are run by "teams" that usually consist of the principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, department heads, and other inhouse personnel. According to Henriquez, 99.9 percent of the decisions reached by the team are based on consensus. The same decision-making process is used by district management teams headed by the superintendent.

Each school also has an advisory committee composed of parents, teachers, students (at the secondary level), and nonparent citizens. Although state law requires that these fifteen-to-twenty-five member committees be involved in establishing goals and plans, their real influence is determined by the principal and school team. According to Henriquez, the advisory committee's authority depends on the relationship between the professional staff and the community.

After hearing the advice of the school teams, the principal approves a consensus decision or makes a decision on his own. Recognizing the authority of the principals, the central office acts as a "facilitator."

Each year, Henriquez and his top-level staff meet with the principals during an annual administration retreat starting the first week of August. Principals are presented with an analysis of new state mandates and the Florida postlegislative review, recommendations of areas where increased teacher input and consensus decision-making could take place, and any additional training that may be needed.

Henriquez reports that the most significant changes in the past five years have been in the way he and the central office "select, train, and induct new principals" into the system. "We try to determine what type of principal, what type of leader, would best meet the needs of that school site." New state legislation requires prospective principals to attend assessment centers where behavioral performance is documented, complete a training program, and then enter an internship and/or an interim principalship before certification. These new measures "minimize the chances of error we experienced in the past when relying heavily on an interview process," Henriquez said.

In the Monroe County School District, the teachers' union is reacting very favorably to the system. Teachers have a positive student-teacher ratio and can buy their own materials and supplies. Because they have a sense of "ownership" in the decisions made at the school, Henriquez believes that over 99 percent of the teachers would say they prefer his district to any other. "That's what school-based management is all about," said Henriquez. "It's giving people an opportunity to have an input." The trade-off for that input, however, is that it takes a lot of extra time and effort to make the participatory process work.

The strength and success of school-based management in Monroe County may also be seen in its response to difficult challenges. For several years, the district's enrollment declined. Principals were faced with decisions concerning the reduction of staff and the cutting out of purchases of materials and supplies. Morale and popular support for school-based management declined in "places where there had to be some drastic and severe cuts," said Henriquez. In 1985 and 1986, the enrollment increased, and attitudes grew positive again as schools developed and expanded their programs.

Henriquez pointed out that Florida's educational reform movement has created a stressful situation as the new requirements are implemented. New extended-day legislation, requiring seven periods a day in high schools instead of five, has reduced the time available for principals to interact with teachers and district staff. To preserve such time, Henriquez reports that schools in his district are becoming "smarter, quicker, and more efficient" in processing information and organizing the routine of the school day.

Despite problems still to be solved, Henriquez reported no effort to move away from school-based management in his district. "It's a definite part of our organizational design," Henriquez stated, "and too many of our people are committed to it."

Martin County

The Martin County School District (1988-89 enrollment about 10,730 students) in southwest Florida initiated a system of school-based management in 1976. According to James Navitsky, superintendent since 1967, the change was precipitated by teachers' and parents' requests to participate more in the system, as well as an anticipated period of rapid growth.

"We spent the first five years of the program not only training principals, but also teachers and individual community persons for school advisory group chairmanships," said Navitsky. When the first changes were made, however, four or five principals chose not to accept the new responsibility and changed positions. Current principals, he said,

> have greater personal satisfaction than county staff people. In fact, the direction of the movement in the district and in the administration has been to the school level. People who have had major district positions, as high as directors of curriculum, are moving off into principalships.

Schools in the Martin County School District have near complete autonomy. With input from teachers, staff, and school advisory groups, principals make the final decisions concerning budget, curriculum, and personnel. Principals design the budget for new and continuing programs, utilities, busing, and special education. Only the food service continues to be centralized.

Schools can also design their own curriculums, as long as they meet the strict state guidelines of what can and should be covered in various grade levels. Textbook selection is restricted to three or four standard series.

In the area of personnel, "principals are responsible for the selection of every employee in their schools," said Navitsky. Policies vary, but in most schools teaching team leaders assist in the selection process.

One of the most positive effects of decentralization in Martin County, Navitsky believes, is the public's readiness to help pass new legislation or to alter funding levels. "When we really need something, we find that the intensity of the support effort is heard much more quickly than in a centralized system."

Navitsky noted that another interesting phenomenon at the community level is an absence of controversy concerning sexual education and other school issues. Throughout the district, Navitsky noted "much stronger support of the individual schools" by citizens.

The process of decentralization, Navitsky said, requires

> the commitment of those people who initially have authority to delegate responsibility. There is power at the central level. There are ground rules by which everybody must operate, but they don't have to be as extensive as most people might think.

The most difficult challenge is the release of authority while retaining responsibility, "especially when things are happening you don't like," he said. The first impulse is to use districtwide measures to control a situation, "but we try to resist that in every case possible. As a rule, time will be on our side."

The next step in Martin County, Navitsky said, will be to increase involvement of parents in the decision-making process. "Since we've been willing to share our authority at the district level, teachers now do not feel insecure in allowing parents to have some say as to what is taught, or at least knowing, understanding, and sharing."

California

As in Florida, the move toward decentralization in California was stimulated in part by state legislation. The Early Childhood Education Act directed state funds to individual schools to improve education in the first three grades. The act also had "well defined requisites for parent involvement in the planning, implementation and evaluation of related school programs," according to the National Urban Coalition.

In 1977, the Early Childhood Education Act was incorporated into the

California School Improvement Program (AB 65). Each school in the program received state funding to form a school site council composed of the principal, teachers, other school personnel, parents, and students (at the secondary level). The California State Department of Education, in a document designed to help districts and schools establish councils, outlines these council responsibilities: "developing a school improvement plan, continuously reviewing the implementation of the plan, assessing the effectiveness of the school program, reviewing and updating the school improvement plan, and establishing the annual school improvement budget."

Encouragement for California's move toward school-based management was also provided by a loose-knit consortium of twenty-five superintendents, according to James Guthrie. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the superintendents—most of whom were from Southern California—started to meet informally to work on the idea of school-by-school budgeting with the hope that it could improve the delivery of educational services and increase accountability.

As in Florida, the implementation of school-based management has been slow in California. Some districts that started the system, such as Newport-Mesa, went back to centralized systems. In a few scattered districts, though, school-based management has been a success. Two of these successful districts are Fairfield-Suisun Unified and Irvine Unified.

Fairfield-Suisun Unified

The Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District (1988-89 enrollment about 17,770) began its move toward a decentralized management system in March 1973. The district's objectives included finding the best management system, developing school-based management, providing for community and staff input to the budgeting process, and "improving the community's knowledge of the school district by establishing a district information system," wrote Barbara Wells and Larry Carr, principals at Fairfield-Suisun Unified, in 1978.

Because the district gave more control of the budget to school administrators and school-site councils, Wells and Carr stated, principals received "the substance to change priorities that affect the quality of education at the school site." Interviewed in 1986, Carr said that in the past five years the principals' control of salaries has been centralized again, but that schools still receive discretionary funds with which they design their own budgets. School-site administrators, teachers, and parents can plan their own program, select materials, and purchase equipment as long as they have enough money, Carr said.

Although the schools do not receive total budget authority, Ernest Moretti, the district's superintendent, believes the experience of budgeting utilities and programs at the school site has many positive effects. As teachers and staff become more involved with decision-making, their sense of "ownership" increases while they become more aware of what different programs cost.

The district has established the departments of maintenance, data processing, printing, food services, transportation, and personnel as independent budgeting units. Schools buy the services out of their budgets each year and can carry over any surpluses they have. Large maintenance expenditures and other emergency expenses, however, come out of the district's undistributed reserve. Because schools have control over their budget, building personnel have learned to be very ingenious in using and saving funds, particularly on utilities.

Special programs, including Saturday School for students with truancy problems and opportunity classes in the secondary schools, were developed with input from the individual schools yet were implemented with district funds. "For these programs, we don't ask the schools to put up their own money," said Moretti, "so they still have their discretionary funds."

In the personnel area, a panel of teachers and community members aids in the selection process, but the principal has the final hiring authority (with the restriction that intradistrict transfers be placed first). Upon entering a brand new school in 1986, Carr reported having "the opportunity to hire almost the entire staff."

The district office evaluates the academic standards of individual schools by using special state assessment programs and a management monitoring system. Test scores are reviewed and surveys of parents, teachers, and secondary students are made to allow a wide range of input and opinions about how each school is operating. Once the information is accumulated, according to Moretti, it is made available to the schools so as to provide insight into possible changes or new programs.

For school-based management to work, Moretti believes that the district staff "must buy in" and supply the services and support necessary for schools to develop independent plans and objectives. "The key is really trust," said Carr. "There has to be a great deal of trust, both in the district office out to the schools, and the schools back to the district office. We have been fortunate that trust does exist."

Irvine Unified

The Irvine Unified School District (1988-89 enrollment about 22,540) was created by election in 1972. It consisted at that time of six elementary schools and one high school. Today, there are twenty-seven schools in the district, and the district's enrollment continues to grow.

"From the district's inception," states the National Urban Coalition, "the superintendent and school board had agreed that the school site was to be the basic unit of management." According to Superintendent Stanley Corey, the school-based management system has operated "very well" through a period of turbulent growth in the district.

From the beginning, principals in the district were responsible for goal setting, needs assessment, reporting educational results to the community, budgeting, program planning, and staff selection, development, and evaluation. The one condition is that the principal's staff be fully involved in all important

decisions. "That's the trade-off," said Corey. "He can have lots of autonomy as long as he shows me it's participative. If he can't handle that, then we have to get a new principal."

Due to a districtwide fiscal crisis, the school-site budgeting system has been modified in recent years. Discretionary funds the schools use to design their own budgets have been reduced, and many state and general funds are now offered on a competitive basis.

Corey reports that school-based management in his district has also been affected by a "statewide reform movement which has as its centerpiece the notion of standardized curricula and higher degrees of conformity." The enforcement of curricula uniformity, however, should have only a slight effect in the district, Corey believes. "Our site discretion is essentially one of means and methodology. Curriculum being the content to be taught, the methodology is a matter of individual style and knowledge."

Despite the changes necessitated by outside forces, school-based management is considered a major success in the Irvine Unified School District. Assessment results have continued to climb for fourteen years, the schools score in the low- to mid-nineties on the California Assessment Measures, and students in special education programs are finding jobs and independence.

"The community has internalized the management structure," Corey stated. "They expect the involvement both at the site level and district level, and they do participate." Each school participating in the California School Improvement Program has a site council, while all other schools have a school advisory forum. The principals retain final decision-making authority but are heavily accountable to these community-involvement bodies.

Corey said the district's principals understand that with the type of discretion they enjoy comes heavy responsibility:

> In this type of system, there are two types of forces at work. One is a centrifugal force which tends to drive people out from a central tendency with the independence they have You have to balance that with a centripetal force to hold them together as an organization and a unit. We have done that through participation at the district level in policy and curriculum formation.

Lunenburg, Massachusetts

The Lunenburg Public School District (1988-89 enrollment about 1,600) began independent alterations of its school-site management structure in 1982 due to severe reductions in funding. William C. Allard, the superintendent at that time, was the main author of the changes.

"I have long felt that the principal must be the total educational leader of his building," Allard wrote in 1983. A reorganization of authority made the principal responsible for "curriculum, staff evaluation, student evaluation, discipline, purchasing, and monitoring of achievement and staff morale" in his or her school.

The greatest change in the individual schools was the replacement of department heads with interdisciplinary program coordinators. By developing coordinators of related disciplines (humanities, research sciences, applied science, arts), groups of teachers could meet as a single group "to discuss every aspect of their program, budgets, staffing, and future curriculum changes."

Charles Lamontagne, Lunenburg's current superintendent, told us the changes Allard made were effective and necessary. "The input and the opinions of people in developing assessment information, new programs, and new financial proposals are very helpful, especially in a small district where we don't have a lot of legwork people."

State law in Massachusetts currently requires all district budget and personnel decisions to be made by the superintendent. In the Lunenburg School District, however, the central office has been reduced to "the superintendent and a few clerks helping him," said Lamontagne. "There is no internal central office organization with traditional personnel. There are no assistant superintendents for curriculum, coordinators to articulate curriculum, supervising staff, or business organization staff."

The involvement and input of school administrators and community involvement groups are essential if good decisions are to be made. According to Lamontagne, the principals are now the superintendent's "co-decision makers."

Cherry Creek School District, Colorado

The Cherry Creek School District (1988-89 enrollment about 27,250) in suburban-metropolitan Denver has developed and refined its school-based management system over a long period. "It is to the point that when the district opens a new school, the principal gets a shell and must design and develop everything in it," said Principal Douglas Gowler in 1980. He reported having "95 percent or more autonomy" over personnel and curriculum in the Sagebrush Elementary School that he heads.

Even though the district has expanded from eleven to thirty-five schools in the past thirteen years, the central office staff remains very small. The individual schools perform many of the traditional central office functions, and the principals can be paid well for their extra duties.

"Our superintendent sees principals as curriculum directors, directors of special education, directors of finance, and so on, as well as principals," stated Gowler in a 1980 article. "He hires us to do all those things, and he gives us the freedom to do them. In other words, he lets us rise or fall on our own strengths and abilities."

In a 1986 interview, Gowler said that the eight principles presented in Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* should be considered by every school district. "All of those talk about staying close to the customer and keeping the decision-making as close to that customer as possible, which means we must give that authority to the local schools."

As an example, the teacher selection process at Sagebrush Elementary begins with meetings between Gowler and a teacher team with which the new teacher will work; together they develop a job description that is then advertised. After an initial screening by the district's personnel department, Gowler interviews his choice of the applicants and sends the best of these—those who could "teach under a tree"—to the teacher team and the team makes the final choice. The schools may also decide to hire paraprofessionals instead of professionals.

Gowler and the school's staff continually refine most of their own instructional materials, and they design according to the students' needs. The autonomy at the school level includes the choice of textbooks. "We do not use major publishers, and there's no pressure for us to do that," said Gowler.

Parents have been very much involved in Sagebrush Elementary ever since it was built, even before it was built. Community support, Gowler reports, is "fantastically strong." Gowler works with parents through the parent-teacher organization, and parents work closely with Gowler in developing school policy.

What makes the difference in Cherry Creek are commitment and trust, said Gowler. The staff are extremely committed to their school and spend extra time to make it work. "The sense of ownership really generates from within the school itself and then leads to its own success."

Portland School District, Oregon

The Portland School District (1988-89 enrollment about 53,000) has developed a "hybrid" form of site-based management, according to Superintendent Matthew Prophet. Throughout the ninety-two schools in the district, budget authority and personnel selection continue to be decentralized. In the area of curriculum, however, important compromises have been made in recent years.

Prophet was superintendent of the Lansing School District, Michigan, from the late seventies to early eighties. The district had been successfully decentralized for over a decade, but problems were developing that would lead Prophet and his successors to recentralize the management system.

In retrospect, both Prophet and Richard Halik, the current superintendent at Lansing, believe that the dissolution of the decentralized system was caused primarily by a lack of control of curriculum standards. The root problem could be pinpointed as the principals' freedom to choose textbooks and design curriculum for their schools. In Lansing, this resulted in too many different systems being developed; thus the central office was unable to compare a particular school's standards with those of other schools in the district. Contact with the district office and cross-school communication also began to decrease.

Prophet considered the problems that occurred in Lansing when decentralizing the Portland School District. An important ingredient in Portland's system is community and school-site input in decision-making.

Teachers and citizen groups participate in the most important issues, but it is the principal who makes the final decisions, sometimes exercising his "51 percent" of authority.

Prophet also reports that the schools receive "consolidated building budgets" allocated on a per student basis. Principals have control over nearly all annual expenditures and "decide how to use those resources to fit their needs." In hiring new personnel, it is the district's responsibility to conduct the primary screening of teacher candidates and maintain a pool of qualified applicants, but the final selection is made by the principal, teachers, and other participants at the school.

The most important change distinguishing Portland's system from the previous system at Lansing is the adoption by Portland of a basal text for each subject taught in each school. The district also provides centralized preservice teacher training to "delineate precise 'product' and content expectations" for each subject, according to Prophet.

Despite these changes, individual schools still retain important autonomy in the area of curriculum. "We still decentralize the method by which the subject may be taught," said Prophet. By retaining the choice of teaching methodology, as well as the selection of supplemental materials to be used with the basal text, principals and teachers can design "delivery systems" to meet the unique needs of their students, even though the content remains equal throughout the district.

In the Portland School District, all indicators suggest that Prophet's school-based management "hybrid" is operating exceptionally well. Over the past four years, the national academic rating of the students has increased from the fiftieth percentile to between the sixty-fifth and seventieth percentiles. "All kids are improving," said Prophet, "and the gap between the minority and nonminority kids is slowly closing." A new disciplinary code developed with teachers and parents has solved many problems, and the dropout rate has declined.

Community and staff support is very strong. Teachers, parents, and community members form local school advisory committees that work directly with the principal in making important decisions. There is also a separate budget review committee at each school. Prophet believes that community support may be the main reason why the district has no budgetary problems at this time.

"What existed as the proper balance between structure and freedom in the early seventies is no longer the same equation," Prophet stated. Federal, state, and local authorities now expect greater accountability and "standardized expectations." Careful delineation of content and final outcomes is necessary in large districts; nevertheless, the setting of those expectations and the deciding of what functions are to be centralized should still be done by community and school-site committees, Prophet believes.

"The main thing is to give people throughout the system a piece of the action," said Prophet. "If they have ideas and ways to adopt certain methods

that they think are going to help the kids, and they really want to do it, that's half the battle."

The Transfer of Authority

In a school-based management system, the principal becomes the central actor. The great responsibility that the principal now shoulders is matched by an equivalent measure of authority. With both the responsibility and authority, the principal is free to become the leader of his or her school.

The relationship most changed by the implementation of school-based management is that between the central office and the school site. Because the site administrators will inherit power and authority primarily from the central office, the roles of central office administrators will change nearly as much as the role of the principal. Thus, before describing the principal's new role in detail, we outline the complementary role of the central office. And prior to that, the school board's role in a school-based management system is briefly reviewed.

The School Board

In a change to school-based management, the role of the school board would not change significantly. The board's primary duties would still be to give general direction for the district by providing goals and policy statements, keeping informed about the district's progress toward new goals, and acting as a decision-maker of last resort. Only if a board has involved itself in the details of school operations—for example, specifying the kinds of equipment that should be allocated to each school—would its role have to change in a school-based management system.

According to Paul Cunningham, a school board member in Cambridge, Maryland, the school board would not relinquish any of its power in a change to a decentralized budgeting system. The board's role would remain that of developing broad policies for the operation of the school district. As Cunningham notes, "when the board makes the decision to decentralize the decision-making process, it is exercising policy development of the highest order." Once the decision has been made,

> it is the responsibility of the superintendent to submit a plan for board approval. The board is not relinquishing any of its authority to fix the budget. In the event that a budget must be reduced, the superintendent is given the directive and the amount by which it is to be cut. The staff (including building principals), on the other hand, should determine where the cuts are to be made

The redistribution of authority that accompanies school-based management can actually work to the advantage of the school board because, as Barbara Parker states, "the total school system becomes more accountable

and those at the top can get more results." Parker quotes Oron South, an organizational development consultant to Monroe County during its change to school-based management, as saying that decentralized management gives board members "a greater sense of power—not so much to order people around, but finally to get something done."

Support from the school board is vital to the success of school-based management. In Martin County, Florida, Superintendent James Navitsky admits that "when something starts to go wrong," there is a strong temptation for the school board and central office "to go for the 'quick fix' and commit to telling 'thall shalt'." When a district utilizing school-based management is faced with difficult challenges, the resistance to stepping in often "depends on how committed your school board and superintendent remain," according to Navitsky. It is clear that the school board, like the central office, needs to share a great deal of trust and patience with school administrators if school-based management is to succeed.

The Central Office: Facilitator

In school-based management systems, central administrators shed some of their authority and become managers of the school system instead of its bosses. The district staff provides support and objective evaluations instead of mandatory directives. In short, they "facilitate, not dictate," as Matthew Prophet put it.

The principal and other school-site personnel design the budget, hire new instructors and other school personnel, and prepare the curriculum. The central office focuses on "developing student and staff performance standards, offering technical assistance to schools," determining how much funding each school should receive, and "carrying out systemwide planning, monitoring and evaluation," states the National Urban Coalition.

The chief business official in the district has traditionally been responsible for three main functions: maintaining tight fiscal control over school budgets, providing technical assistance to the schools, and acting as the comptroller, or monitor, of district expenditures. In a school-based management system, the principal becomes responsible for tight fiscal control, but the business officer continues the other two functions.

As John C. Prasch notes, schools should receive an annual budget based on number of students and program needs. At that point, the principals become "responsible for the requisition, management, distribution, and utilization of supplies within the building." The business officer and office of business services are then "responsible for the actual purchasing, warehousing, and distribution of supplies to buildings and for providing the necessary forms and establishing efficient procedures to facilitate the process."

Personnel at the school site determine what items to purchase and forward a requisition order to the purchasing officer at the central office. The purchasing officer orders the items, pays the vendor, and charges the school's

budget accordingly. This process allows the central office to keep an eye on the schools' purchases and make sure that the schools don't overshoot their submitted budget.

In a school-based management system, the district personnel officer continues to be responsible for recruiting employees, collecting information about applicants, maintaining personnel records, and providing technical assistance to the school site. The principal and other building level personnel become responsible for the actual selection of staff for their school.

The chief instructional officer of the district should maintain the traditional functions of that office—providing technical assistance and general direction to schools and monitoring effectiveness—but should not dictate the details of the curriculum. To ascertain that students are competent in basic skills, the district should continue to monitor schools with both standardized tests and visitation. Although the individual schools must continue to meet the educational standards of the district, they should be free to achieve those goals in whatever way they see fit.

The superintendent will always be the chief administrator of the district and the one person responsible to the school board for administrative decisions. Experience in district after district has shown that strong support for school-based management by the superintendent is absolutely necessary for its successful implementation. Superintendents become increasingly dedicated to decentralized management once they realize how it can help them meet the responsibilities of their office in a more effective and efficient manner. As the entire system becomes more accountable and responsive to client needs, say proponents of school-based management, the job at the top becomes easier and easier.

The Principal: School Leader

> The renewal or remaking of society is imaged in the remaking, the restructuring of education, which, in turn, is epitomized by the remaking of the principalship.

These words of John Bremer reflect the growing consensus among educators that the leadership role of the principal must be exhumed and revived if education—and society—are to find new vitality. Legions of educators and researchers now attest to the importance of the principal to quality schooling. "One of the few uncontested findings in educational research," states Scott Thomson, chief executive officer of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, "is that the principal makes the difference between a mediocre and a good school."

Both Bremer and Thomson believe that considerable autonomy and authority are necessary for an effective principalship. Common sense and contemporary management theory agree, says Thomson, that true educational leadership can only be achieved when the principal is "freed from the blanket

of directives and reports and meetings which now suffocate performance." The principal and school staff "should enjoy considerable latitude in decision making about program, personnel, and budget," within the limits of the general objectives set by the central office and board.

In Lunenburg, Massachusetts, Superintendent Allard made each principal the "total educational leader" of his or her school. "The total leader means that he must be responsible for everything that takes place in his building." By giving principals responsibility for curriculum, staff and student evaluation, discipline, and purchasing, Allard discovered that decisions could be "made faster and with more teacher and staff *input* than before" (his emphasis).

By establishing the principal as the "total educational leader," one person becomes truly accountable for what takes place in each building. In most districts, important decisions are made in the central office and passed down the line to principals and then to teachers. This separation of decision-making and implementation can lead to problems, states Marburger, when new reforms are "disregarded by those charged with carrying them out, especially if they had no voice in determining the decisions in the first place." The responsibility for educational outcomes is a hot potato, juggled from principal to teacher to central office and never seeming to come to rest.

What needs to be done, as Albert H. Shuster states, is to close "the gap between the authority for initiating and operating school programs and the responsibility for their success or failure." In line with this view, the Edmonton Public Schools (Alberta, Canada) has organized its school-based management system around such principles as the following (quoted by Daniel Brown):

> No one shall have authority to direct or veto any decision or action where that person is not accountable for the results.
>
> The organization should avoid uniform rules, practices, policies and regulations which are designed to protect the organization against "mistakes."

From all accounts, it appears that school-based management would mean work for the principal. According to the National Urban Coalition, the building site administrator "would have to attend a much larger set of managerial tasks tied to the delivery of educational services," including "program planning, development and evaluation, personnel selection and assignment, staff development and evaluation, and budget management." In addition, the principal would be further burdened by the extra time and effort required by shared decision-making processes at the school site.

The new responsibilities may discourage some already overworked principals from trying the system. Along with the extra burden, however, principals gain authority and control to guide their schools. The rewards of leadership and authority may well be sufficient compensation for the added administrative burden.

One way to ease the data management part of that burden is to make efficient use of computerized management information systems. Ad-

ministrators at each school should have access to computers and software that permit the manipulation of budgetary and other data necessary for decision-making at the school site.

Most principals will respond positively to the opportunity to become autonomous school leaders, but some will not. A common figure given by school-based management consultants is that 20 to 30 percent of principals will not find the system satisfactory. Many in this fraction would rather continue to be middle managers for the district, and they may view the new management system as a threat.

The dramatic change in the principal's role necessitates extensive retraining of current principals. Without this retraining, the new management system is not likely to survive its first real challenge. Instead of staying with the new system when a crisis arises, people will tend to fall back on the workings of the familiar centralized system.

It is also important to reevaluate selection criteria for hiring new principals. The new leadership and management roles will require outstanding candidates. According to Allard, one way of preparing prospective principals is to restructure the responsibilities of assistant principals: they can be given training and exposed to the actual responsibilities of principals in a decentralized system as part of their preparation for the position. Such experience can also help in assessing whether each person is right for the job.

Three Critical Control Areas

Which kinds of decisions should be decentralized to the school site, and which should remain centralized? Results of a survey of California educators, states Pierce, support "the conclusion that decisions related to the delivery of school programs (personnel, curriculum and budgeting) can be effectively decentralized while those decisions which provide supportive service (transportation, maintenance, warehousing, data processing, etc.) should remain centralized." The administrators in school-based management districts interviewed in this chapter share these perceptions.

The three main areas in which principals and their staffs would gain authority in a school-based management system are curriculum, personnel, and budget.

Curriculum

In a school-based management system, the school site has the authority to design and focus curriculum. Within broad outlines defined by the board, the individual schools are free to teach in any manner they see fit. As long as the schools are attaining the educational goals set by the board, the district does not intervene. The central office provides technical assistance to the school sites in instructional matters and monitors the schools' effectiveness.

However, it is the principal's job to work with staff and parents to determine educational needs and tailor the school's curriculum around these needs.

In general, the boards and central offices in most school-based management districts establish an outline of educational objectives and leave the schools free to meet those objectives in any way they see fit. The central office may maintain a selection of curricula from which the schools can develop their own systems that are then screened by district administrators. In the Cherry Creek School District, Principal Doug Gowler and his staff have diversified their school's curricula by selecting a variety of published materials, as opposed to using textbooks and curricula recommended by the district. Large districts such as Portland require a common basal text, but each school retains autonomy in the way the content is taught and supplemented by other materials.

Prasch suggests a sample curriculum policy statement:

> To assist the school staff and to provide some degree of coordination among schools, the district provides a written curriculum in each subject area. This curriculum specifies goals, includes teaching plans, and identifies recommended materials. In most cases, schools may use methods or materials other than the recommended ones, provided they have the written permission of the associate superintendent for instruction.

This type of policy is similar to Matthew Prophet's delineation of educational "content" and "expected outcomes" in the Portland School District. What is expected of the schools is clearly defined, but how they achieve those goals is a matter of individual style and student needs.

In general, the implementation of school-based management leads to an increase in the diversity of educational approaches. Teachers and principals gain more freedom to design their own instructional programs, and parents gain more influence in the design of those programs. Some schools may opt for a back-to-basics focus, others for open classrooms. Still others may adopt both approaches and have "schools within schools."

Personnel

To tailor schools' educational programs to the needs and desires of the community, principals must have control of their major resource—teachers. In most districts with school-based management, principals make the final choice of who will work in their schools. The most common practice is for the central office to maintain a pool of qualified applicants. When a position opens up, the principal—often with involvement from teachers, staff, and community—selects from the pool. The district usually negotiates salaries, working conditions, fringe benefits, and grievance procedures with the union, but the actual decision to hire is made by the principal.

In many school-based management districts, the principal may choose to hire paraprofessionals instead of certificated teachers. In some districts, the

decision must be reached mutually between the principal and school staff. In other districts, the decision can be made by the principal alone, as long as the school stays within the state staffing laws.

So far, resistance from teachers unions to school-based management has been minimal. One fear expressed by teachers is that principals might start acting as dictators if given increasing authority, so some unions want protection against this kind of mismanagement. Essentially, however, the concerns of teachers unions do not significantly conflict with the concerns of school-based management.

Budget

Budget control is at the heart of school-based management, as is attested by some of the alternative names for the concept, such as "school based budgeting" and "school site lump sum budgeting." Control of the curricula and of personnel are largely dependent on the control of the budget.

Most centralized districts allow principals control over expenditures for supplies and equipment only. Many school-based management districts, on the other hand, give the school a "lump sum," which the school site can spend in any way it sees fit. Although schools do not receive the money outright, they purchase the products and services they need through or from the central office. The schools make the decision to spend, and the central office carries out the schools' orders. This system allows the central office to continue to monitor school spending and intervene when a school is exceeding its budget or has other budget problems.

The first step of the budget process involves the allocation of lump sums to the individual schools. The amount may be determined with the aid of various per pupil rating schemes, some of which are quite elaborate. Whatever formula is used, the important point is that funds are allocated uniformly. Several principals in two Canadian districts that use school-based management told Daniel Brown they "would not want to return to 'squeaky-wheel budgeting', where allocations were affected by principals lobbying with central office staff."

In the second major step of the process, the school site prepares its budget. This is the most critical process in school-based management, for it is from this process that most of the advantages of decentralized management stem, in particular the flexibility of the school to meet students' needs and the feelings of ownership that people derive from making decisions at the school site. The budget should be prepared with input from the school's staff, community, and students (at the secondary level).

Budgeting at the school site, say proponents, increases the efficiency of resource allocation. In a centralized system, according to Prasch, "nothing is more debilitating to a staff's sense of ownership and responsibility than to be required to spend all of one's funds in a given category only because it's the end of budget year." By allowing schools to carry over surplus funds and to

reallocate funds into categories with unmet needs, new goals can be achieved without budget increases.

"The biggest claim for School Site Budgeting/Management," notes JoAnn Palmer Spear, "is that decisions are made closest to the student and that's what really sells it." Teachers and other school staff become more aware of the costs of programs, the school's financial status, and its spending limitations. Old programs "fade away to permit the establishment of alternative new ones," says Charles W. Fowler. Budgeting becomes "ma edly more realistic," he says, because the charade "of requesting more money than expected in hopes of receiving a reduced amount still sufficient for program goals" is ended.

Shared Decision-Making

Increased community and staff participation in school decision-making has been an important component of school-based management wherever it has been implemented. Teachers, parents, and oftentimes students participate in decision-making as members of school advisory councils, which are usually distinct from the traditional PTAs or PTOs. Advisory councils vary widely in form, but generally they are composed of the principal, classroom teachers, other school personnel, parents, nonparent citizens, and students (at the secondary level). In some districts, the principal meets separately with a staff council as well as with an advisory council. Although their input usually comes by way of the same council, the involvement of staff and community members are considered separately here.

In a new variation of school-based management, some districts are delegating almost all site authority to school-based management councils. The philosophy of this form of management focuses on the importance of shared decision-making with teachers, parents, community members, and students. School-based management councils are discussed at the end of this section.

Staff Involvement

It is possible, as noted earlier, to shift power and authority from the central office to the school without further decentralization. But sharing decision-making authority at the school site, states Donald E. Beers, "creates ownership and therefore leads to a more positive attitude towards the organization." Thus, it behooves the principal to involve teachers in policy decisions and give them more authority to design, develop, and evaluate their own curricula. To match this new authority, teachers should also be held responsible for their students' performance, states Pierce.

In some site management districts, policies and collective bargaining agreements require that principals involve teachers in decision-making. Other districts only encourage the principal to involve others. Thus, the extent of teacher involvement varies widely from district to district and from school to

school. In general, all site management schools have actively engaged teachers to some extent.

"As the climate created by decentralization demanded that teachers be significant decision makers, they would gradually become more educationally responsible," states John Gasson. "They would teach according to their own beliefs, using the instructional materials that they had individually chosen for their particular setting." Eventually, they would become the "major recognized determiners of the curriculum."

Community Involvement

School-based management often allies itself with the community involvement movement. Both seek decentralization, but school-based management is more of an "administrative" decentralization that preserves the notion of professional control of education. The community involvement movement, on the other hand, is more "political" in nature and seeks to transfer real power to the community level. Here our discussion is confined to community involvement within a school-based management system.

The advantages of involving parents and other community members in school decision-making are well acknowledged. Public involvement enhances public support of the schools. Schools become more responsive to community and student needs. Parents can participate in decisions that affect their children and have more of a sense of ownership of their school.

The question that remains is how to achieve community input while retaining an accountable educational system. If advisory councils have only the appearance of involvement, they can create a barrier to true community input. On the other hand, if the advisory committees are given real authority, there is no way to hold them accountable for the decisions they enforce.

The only avenue left open—while still retaining the general structure of the educational governance system—is for school administrators to voluntarily accept and adopt the advice offered by community advisory councils. If the recommendations of the councils are repeatedly ignored or rejected, both effectiveness and membership will decline.

According to Goodlad's surveys, most parents want increased say in public education, but they would not have their authority supersede that of professional educators. There is no evidence to suggest that parents are "seeking to take over their schools." A common sentiment, however, was clear in Goodlad's data: parents

> would take power from the more remote, less visible, more impersonal authorities heading the system and place it in the hands of the more visible, more personally known, close-at-hand staff of the school and parent groups close to the school.

To use Peters and Waterman's terminology, parents would like to see decision-making moved "closer to the customer."

School-Based Management Councils

A mechanism for giving teachers, parents, and community members a formal role in decision-making from the very start of decentralization is the school-based management council, described by Marburger.

The first step in forming a school-based management council occurs when teachers, parents, and community groups voice their desire for involvement. The actual development of the council is determined by the support and commitment of the superintendent, the school board, and the school principals. Each council's structure is unique, responding to the philosophy and needs of a particular district. Procedures for selecting council members and defining their authority are specified in policies written at the very start of the process.

According to Marburger, membership of school-based management councils usually includes the principal; a specific number of teachers; school staff members; and specially trained parents, community members, and sometimes students. The principal may retain authority for some decision-making, such as personnel selection, but all other decisions concerning the school budget, curriculum, and new programs are made by the council through a consensus voting process. The principal serves as chairperson but cannot veto council decisions.

All forms of school-based management are based on a process of trust. For school-based management councils to be effective, the superintendent and school board must delegate authority to the local schools and trust the principals and their staffs to share their authority with the councils. At the school site, the members of the council must "trust in each other to join in making decisions that will be in the best interest of all the students at their school," Marburger states.

There are many reasons, of course, why school-based management councils may not be suitable for a district. Some groups may want to take control of the decision-making processes of schools. In the school-based management system of Martin County, Florida, parent advisory groups occasionally had to be restrained from "setting up their own central offices" and becoming "too dictatorial," stated Superintendent James Navitsky.

Despite these potential abuses, such councils are a logical extension of school-based management. In the Cherry Creek School District, Colorado, Principal Douglas Gowler reported that the establishment of trust between school administrators and teachers was an important prerequisite to the formal involvement of parents and community members. Eventually, many more districts with decentralized management systems may establish and grant authority to school-based management councils.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, the essential elements of school-based management have been described, with special emphasis on the principal's role in a

decentralized management system. In brief, a shift to school-based management would change the role of the principal from that of a middle manager for the district to leader of the school. As the school site replaces the district as the basic unit of educational governance, the principal becomes the central actor in school management with authority over curricula, staffing, and budget matters. The central office, which now dictates many of the actions that individual schools take, would become the facilitator of decisions made at the school site. Parents, teachers, and students would work with the principal to develop educational goals and implement decisions they helped make.

Numerous examples of working school-based management systems already exist, and much can be learned by studying these districts. Successful implementation requires, first of all, extensive retraining of central office and school site personnel. The biggest stumbling block in implementing school-based management is breaking down the conventions that people hold about what should or can be. With extensive retraining and education, so that all school and central office personnel understand the new system, the change can be made smoothly and the school can stabilize in its new management mode.

Successful implementation also requires strong support from the school board and superintendent. In fact, as Brian J. Caldwell notes, the initiative to implement decentralized budgeting "has invariably been taken by superintendents who have contended that better decisions will be made if resources are allocated with a high degree of school involvement."

Before it starts, the district must have a clear idea of the extent to which power will be decentralized. The authority that is to be given to the school site and to staff and community members should be decided in advance, to avoid confusion and conflict.

Finally, successful implementation requires a good deal of trust and commitment. The superintendent must trust school site personnel to do their jobs, and all concerned must be committed to making the system work. By all accounts, the system requires more work at the school site, but many educators believe that the rewards of autonomy and feelings of ownership are well worth the extra time and effort spent.