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Observing Leadership Roles in Shared Decision Making: A Preliminary Analysis of Three Teams

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Despite recent attention to shared decision making as an approach to school reform, relatively little research has been conducted on the topic, and much of that research has relied on interviews and field notes, rather than systematic observation of team functioning. This investigation integrated systematic observations and interviews. The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership behaviors exhibited by principals, team leaders, and other team members (teachers, parents, students). We defined leadership according to team member contributions to decisions (decision content, decision-making processes, and statement function, such as initiating topics and making suggestions). This investigation used a comparative case study approach to examine the shared decision-making teams from three schools during the teams' first year. Results revealed variability in leadership across the three teams. Two teams were characterized by positive group process procedures with active involvement from a number of team members. A third team was dominated by the building principal with minimal input from most team members. This team appeared to be less productive than the other two. These findings are viewed in relationship to prior research literature concerning the ambiguity of team members' roles, lack of clarity concerning the power of shared decision-making teams, and the impact of school vision. Suggestions are made for future research.

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Recent discussions about educational restructuring emphasize involvement of teachers and parents in determining schools' approaches to education of all children (e.g., Brost, 2000; Comer, 1993; Conley & Bacharach, 1990; Lange, 1993) and delineate strategies for implementing shared decision making (Bergman, 1992; Lange, 1993). Shared decision making is used to obtain input regarding key educational policy decisions from teams that may include parents, other community members, and a range of educators (i.e., teachers, pupil personnel workers, administrators, etc.). Precedent for this shared decision-making model may also be found in the literature from the fields of business (e.g., see Cross, 1998) and social services (e.g., see Smergut, 1998). Support for shared decision making as one approach to school reform derives from theory concerning facilitative power and participative decision making in which authority for some important decisions is shared by administrators with members of the organization (i.e., teachers) and key stakeholders (i.e., parents and other community members) (e.g., Brown & Hunter, 1998; Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993; Hart, 1995; Hoy & Tarter, 1993; Mohrman, Cooke, & Mohrman, 1978; Strike, 1993). The emphasis that shared decision-making strategies place on shared power and shared leadership means that principals, teachers, and other team members must learn new roles (Blase & Blase, 1999; Brown, 1990; Clift, Veal, Holland, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1995). Despite the recent attention to shared decision making, little research has investigated this process. The purpose of this article is to add to this knowledge base and facilitate the efforts of consultants who work closely with schools to effect change.

Proponents of shared decision making argue that it has the potential to encourage more democratic school organization and to effect important benefits in schools (Bergman, 1992; Brouilette, 1997; Hart, 1995; Hoy & Tarter, 1993; Goldman et al., 1993; Lange, 1993; Strike, 1993). Some increases in the democratic functioning of school governance with shared decision making have been documented (Goldman et al., 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996). However, other research suggests that shared decision making has limited impact (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990). Furthermore, some investigations have shown variability in teachers' willingness to participate actively in school-based shared decision-making teams. For example, positive relationships between teachers and principal (Smylie, 1992) and a focus on schoolwide issues, such as the school's mission and selection of instructional materials (Griffin, 1995; Livingston, Slate, & Gibbs, 1999), have been associated with teacher willingness to participate actively on shared decision-making teams.

It is generally acknowledged that the principal plays an important role in shared decision making (e.g., Brown, 1990; Clift et al., 1995; Smylie,

1992; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). One issue that must be accommodated when using shared decision-making teams is the shift in leadership role by the principal. Rather than managing by making decisions and using power to ensure that educators implement administrators' decisions, shared decision making requires principals to share leadership by facilitating educators' active involvement in making and implementing important school-based decisions (Bredeson, 1994). However, principals have had difficulty sharing power (Blase & Blase, 1999; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992), and at least one study has documented that effective change occurred only in situations in which the principal was not the sole source of leadership (Heller & Firestone, 1995). The principal's effectiveness on shared decision-making teams has been maximized when the principal (a) shared decision-making power with team members rather than exercising authoritative power (Goldman et al., 1993; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Johnson & Ledbetter, 1993) and (b) helped to establish a vision to guide reform efforts that included a focus on teaching, learning, and innovation (Goldman et al., 1993; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Keedy & Finch, 1994; Weiss & Cambone, 1994).

One would obtain an oversimplified view of leadership on shared decision-making teams by defining leadership solely in terms of the principal's role. Many shared decision-making teams have formal leadership roles assigned to team members, such as teachers, who are not administrators (Futrell, 1988; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992; Weiss et al., 1992) and shared decision making implies that leadership may be exercised by any team member including teachers and parents (Brown & Hunter, 1998; Goldman et al., 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996). Bredeson (1994), writing about sharing leadership in school reform, referred to Yukl's (1989) definition of political power that is exemplified by control in decision making. Bredeson suggested it is necessary to examine the leadership behaviors of principals, team leaders, and other team members who are not administrators to understand how leadership and power are exercised on shared decision-making teams.

Prior research on shared decision making has generally not used observations to provide detailed descriptions of the ways in which principals and other leaders exercise leadership to establish a school vision. Also lacking is detailed information about the leadership behaviors displayed by shared decision-making team members other than the principal. In this context, most of the prior research on shared decision making is limited to interviews or surveys and does not use direct observations (e.g., Bredeson, 1993, 1994; Griffin, 1995; Jenkins, Ronk, Schrag, Rude, &

Stowitschek, 1994; Livingston et al., 1999; Weiss, 1993; Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992). Although there have been some beginning efforts to collect observational data about shared decision making (e.g., Johnson & Pajares, 1996), no prior research was located that used systematic analysis of verbatim transcripts of team meetings to promote an intentional in situ examination of leadership behaviors of principals, team leaders, and other team members during shared decision making. Therefore, our research seeks to clarify the principal's changing leadership role by contrasting specific leadership behaviors of the principal with the team leader and other team members.

For the purposes of this research, leadership in team decision making is defined based on three factors. First, statements made by team members can have a range of functions with implications for leadership. Statements that initiate a conversation, offer suggestions, or raise important questions may help to provide direction to group decision making (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1997), and these types of statements are used as one definition of leadership in this research. Second, team members may use various decision-making processes that help to define the leadership style of the group. Thus a second approach to defining leadership in this research is based on the number of decisions to which each team member contributes. This can help to promote understanding of team decision-making style based on the number of team members contributing to decisions (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1997). Third, team leadership may be understood in terms of the types of decisions that are reached. Team decisions can be categorized as those procedural decisions that are needed to run meetings and those substantive decisions that address the content of the team's goals. Although procedural decisions may be important in a team's first meetings, it has been suggested that more effective teams engage in a larger number of substantive decisions that help to achieve the team's goals (Easton & Storey, 1994; Ferrara & Repa, 1993; Weiss, 1993).

This research describes the leadership roles and exercise of power in three shared decision-making teams. We describe and compare the leadership behaviors exhibited by principals, team leaders, and other team members. Leadership was indicated by measures of decision-making processes and statement function, whereas team effectiveness was measured by the number of decisions made (particularly substantive decisions) and efficiency in reaching decisions. Three case studies provide comparative evidence, allowing us to determine the similarities and differences in patterns of leadership and their effects on three shared decision-making teams.

METHOD

Design

This research employed a comparative case study design. We contrasted three schools in one district, specifically the district's only primary (K–2), middle (6–8), and high school (9–12). This allowed us to compare the functioning of three teams influenced by the same district history and administration and organized by the same shared decision-making plan as described in the next section on context of the research. This also permitted examination of any differences that might be attributed to school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school levels). Parallel cases were constructed by participant observers.

Participant–observer methodology was a key feature of the design. At the request of the district's assistant superintendent, each team included two researchers: (a) one participant–observer who served as an active member of the team while observing team functioning and (b) one graduate research assistant who did not participate but was responsible for data collection (e.g., observing, taking notes, tape recording and transcribing meeting dialogue). The participant observers were faculty members from local universities with substantial prior experience providing service and conducting research in schools. The research assistants were enrolled in graduate programs in educational or school psychology.

Furthermore, prior to and concurrent with this investigation, these participant observers were invited by the district's assistant superintendent to become members of various district-wide shared decision-making teams in the target district. Their participation began with the initiation of the district's efforts to implement educational reform based on National Goals 2000 (see Kaplan, 1992). This involvement with both school-based and district-wide shared decision-making teams throughout the full year of implementing this research provided prolonged engagement and unique access to the district that afforded an insider's view of the shared decision making and educational reform efforts implemented by this district.

Context and Setting

The shared decision-making teams described here functioned in a small school district in the greater capital district of New York. The district served roughly 3,000 students from predominately White, middle-class families. The district was engaged in a 5-year collaborative research endeavor with a

local university examining the process and content of the district's efforts to implement educational reform. The data reported here were gathered as a part of the 5-year project.

The educational reforms in this district were organized by national and state educational reform efforts. During the 1st year of this 5-year project, the district adopted National Goals 2000 (see Kaplan, 1992) as its approach to educational reform. National Goals 2000 established a number of major educational goals, such as school readiness; school completion; student achievement and citizenship; excellence in mathematics and science; adult literacy and lifelong learning; safe, disciplined and drug-free schools; teacher education and professional development; and parental participation. School districts were expected to take responsibility for accomplishing these goals. The school district in this investigation adopted these goals and used shared decision-making teams to determine strategies for accomplishing them. During the second year of this project, legislation went into effect that mandated shared decision-making teams in all school buildings in New York State, and this reinforced the district's efforts to use shared decision-making teams to reach key national education goals. This legislation was a part of New York State's New Compact for Learning (New York State Education Department, 1991).

The state legislation required every district to devise a plan for membership and responsibilities for the shared decision-making teams. The membership plan in the district under study required two parents, faculty representatives, and the building principal to be members of the shared decision-making team. Other constituents could be added at the discretion of each school. The teams were charged with the broad goal of improving academic results for all students. It was up to each team to establish goals and policies that would help to accomplish the broad outcome of improved academic results. This charge was given to all the school-based shared decision-making teams in this district by the assistant superintendent with support from the superintendent and the school board; it was also a component of the charge given to all shared decision-making teams by the state legislation that mandated these teams. According to the district's plan, the building principal was not the team leader. The leader was a volunteer selected by his or her teammates.

This research examined these school-based shared decision-making teams during the first year that they were implemented. The principals and team leaders received training on shared decision making based on a half-day workshop that defined shared decision making and taught strategies for making decisions based on team consensus encouraging input from all team members, as well as group processes needed for effective team

functioning, such as setting an agenda at the end of each meeting that is used to structure the next meeting. Additional training and support were provided to the principals and team leaders through regular meetings that the assistant principal held with principals and team leaders. Although this training was provided for principals and team leaders, the district provided no systematic training to the other members of these teams prior to the school year. However, at the request of the primary school and middle school teams training was provided for these teams during the year. The nature of this added training is discussed when presenting the results for these two teams. Given this level of training for team members and the fact that these teams were initiated during the year of this research, these case studies reflect the functioning of relatively naive teams.

Several recent developments within the district were important influences on the reform process. A new assistant superintendent for instruction encouraged each building to focus its innovations around a particular theme (e.g., developmentally appropriate practices at the primary level). The year that these data were collected coincided with a reorganization of the district's elementary programs. The primary building consisted of a newly merged faculty from two buildings. This occurred when the district changed to a developmental structure in which the two elementary schools were changed to include one school with all children from grades K through 2 and one with all children from grades 3 through 5. As a result, those staff members who moved into this building (about one half the staff) had not worked previously with the building principal.

The Shared Decision-Making Teams

Primary school team. The primary school team included 13 members: 1 building principal, 1 team leader who was an educator, 8 other educators including 1 custodian, 2 parents, and 1 university participant observer (researcher). One of the "other educators" was a co-team leader but was rarely observed to exhibit this role and is thus treated as an educator only. The principal and team leader had received prior training on consensus building and group processes.

The primary school shared decision-making team met an average of two times per month and held 13 meetings during the year. The meetings for this team were scheduled for 1 hr immediately after school.

Middle school team. The middle school team had 13 members consisting of 2 parents, 1 building principal, 1 university participant observer,

and 9 educators. Although two of these educators had the role of team leader one took the primary responsibility for leadership on this team. Thus, the second team leader is treated as an educator in the data analyses. The principal and team leader each received prior training on consensus building and group processes.

The middle school shared decision-making team met about once per month and held nine meetings during the year. The meetings for this team lasted for about 1 hr and were held right after classes were dismissed.

High school team. The high school team had 11 members: 2 parents, 1 building principal, 2 students, 1 university participant observer, and 5 educators. One of these educators served as the team leader and is considered in that role in the data analyses. A second educator and a student also had the role of co-team leader. However, because they did not take as much responsibility for this role, they are considered as an educator and a student, respectively, in all of the data analyses. The principal and team leader had received prior training on consensus building and group processes.

The high school shared decision-making team met about once per month, and this team held seven meetings. The meetings for this team lasted for about 2 hrs and were held in the evening.

Overview of Data Collection

A range of data was collected including the following. Interviews were conducted with at least four members from each team (total = 13 interviews). Interviewees were selected from team members to include the principal, the team leader, one parent member and one educator from each team. The agendas from all meetings were collected. Observational data were collected from all meetings for each of the three teams. Thirty-three meetings were observed and audiotaped (range = 9–13 meetings per team) producing written summaries of each meeting as described later in the methods. In addition, two meetings for each team were transcribed in their entirety and coded according to the procedures described in the following section (total of six transcribed meetings). Meetings were selected for transcription using the following criteria: (a) one meeting (not the first meeting) was selected from the fall and one meeting from the spring semester, (b) meetings were selected when the majority of members were present including the team leaders and principals, and (c) meetings were selected when the written summaries of all meetings suggested that the meeting to be transcribed re-

flected the characteristic functioning of each team. The data that were presented, and conclusions reached in this research are based on all the data referred to in this paragraph. Thus, a substantial database was created to reach conclusions about the functioning of these three shared decision-making teams.

Coding of Transcribed Shared Decision-Making Meetings

Selection and development of transcripts. All team meetings were tape-recorded. To facilitate analysis of the quantitative data, the two attending researchers selected two meetings (one early in the year and one later in the year) for transcription and analysis using the criteria described earlier. In the researchers' judgment, the selected meetings were characteristic of their team in content, group process, and attendance. To ensure that meetings were selected based on these criteria for each of the three teams, a third researcher approved the selections of meetings using the same criteria. It is noted that one possible limitation to the quantitative data is the use of just two transcripts per team (six transcripts overall) that were selected based on researcher judgment. Although this could introduce bias into the design, steps were taken to minimize such bias. First, three researchers who had deep understanding of the reform effort based on the prolonged and extensive involvement with the district were required to agree on the selection of meetings to be transcribed based on the criteria that have been described previously. Second, the extensive qualitative data that were collected (including summaries of all 33 team meetings) were used with the quantitative data to reach conclusions in this research. To accurately attribute statements to the correct team member, the graduate research assistant listed the initials of each speaker, as well as the first few words of each person's statement. After the meeting, these notes were used by the same research assistant to assist with transcription of the dialogue.

Coding decision content and decision-making processes in transcribed meetings. Two coding systems (i.e., decision content and decision-making processes) were developed to describe the specific leadership behaviors exercised by principals, team leaders, and other team members during team discussions and in decision making. There were two sources for these coding systems: theory about shared decision making (Goldman et al.,

1993; Hart, 1995; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Hoy & Tarter, 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996) and the events that occurred at these meetings.

Decisions were defined as an agreement reached by the team regarding an action to be taken during the meeting or after the meeting. This included decisions regarding the goals of the team. Decisions were identified based on independent ratings from three research assistants, including one who was a team member responsible for data collection. After they reached agreement about what decisions had been made, a final check was made by the participant observer from the team who coded the transcript independently. Prior to coding for the content and process of decisions, agreement was reached between all four of these raters about what decisions were present based on the definition provided earlier in this paragraph.

The first coding system categorized what the decisions were about: the decision content. This scoring system differentiated between procedural and substantive decisions. Procedural decisions were defined as decisions concerned with methods used to run the meetings, including decisions about roles people would play (e.g., observer, timekeeper, scribe), activities to facilitate the meeting, approaches to obtain input from team members, and meeting dates. Substantive decisions were defined as decisions concerning the meeting topics. Examples of substantive decisions included decisions about the team's mission statement, the content of surveys administered to faculty or students, educational standards endorsed by the team, and so forth.

The second coding system categorized how the decisions were made: the decision-making processes. Four decision-making processes were included in this coding system. Self-authorized decisions were defined as decisions made by just one team member. For example, the team leader of one team indicated that the meeting would be initiated with an icebreaker activity or the principal of another team indicated that he was going to take over leadership of the team.

Decisions made by agreement between just two team members were called handshake decisions. For example, the principal and team leader from one team agreed that the principal would lead the icebreaker activity to initiate the meeting; the principal and team leader of another team agreed that the team should determine the next staff development priority for the school; the team leader and a team member from another team agreed that the team member would play the role of timekeeper.

Decisions made by implied consensus were defined as situations in which three or more team members participated and verbally concurred, but no formal test for consensus was made. An example of this type of de-

cision occurred when several team members discussed a standard for student attendance and agreed that the current standard could be accepted with no changes. Although each individual expressed agreement with the decision to accept this standard, no formal polling of each team member assessed whether all team members agreed.

We also coded decisions made based on a formal test for consensus among all team members. An example of formal test for consensus occurred in the same team when discussing another standard for student behavior. One of the team members asked: "So, are we all in consensus that this should be the standard for this behavior?" and each team member indicated agreement.

Statement coding. A third coding system focused on statements, rather than decisions. Statements were defined as each remark expressed by a team member. Usually these were represented grammatically in the transcripts with a period, question mark, or semicolon. When an incomplete sentence introduced a new thought that was distinct from the previous and following statements, the incomplete sentence was coded separately. Otherwise incomplete sentences did not receive an additional code because they were treated as part of the adjoining sentence. We coded the statement function for each remark made by each team member during team discussions. Coding categories for this system included the following: (I) initiating a new topic; (Q) questions; (R) responses; and (S) suggestions.

Initiating a new topic (I) was defined as any statement that began a new topic of conversation that was pursued by the team following this statement. If a question was used to introduce a new topic then "initiating a new topic" was coded rather than question. An example of this coding category occurred when a team leader stated that the next topic of discussion was to have committee reports.

Questions (Q) were defined as any interrogative statement made that attempted to obtain information or a reaction from one or more of the other team members. As noted earlier, questions were not coded when the statement served to initiate a new topic. Examples of questions occurred when a principal asked the team members how they felt they were doing in terms of providing an opportunity for everyone to have input into the discussion, when another principal asked if everyone on the team was comfortable with a decision that had been reached, and when a team member asked for clarification because he did not understand the prior discussion.

Responses (R) were defined as any statement that answered a question or served as a direct response to a suggestion or other statement made by an-

other team member. If a response served to introduce a new topic then the statement was coded as a topic initiation (I) rather than a response (R). One example of a response occurred when a team member answered a question about whether a document on the table was the minutes from the last meeting. Another example of a response occurred during a discussion of standards for student attendance. One team member contributed to this ongoing discussion by confirming the importance of this standard due to the opinion that children who attend school regularly are more likely to be successful in school than those who do not attend regularly.

Suggestions (S) were defined as any statement, within the topic under discussion, that makes a suggestion to one or more team members about a future behavior or decision that would involve one or more team members. Topic initiation (I) was scored instead of suggestion (S) if the suggestion started a new topic of discussion. However, because we were particularly interested in the potential leadership function served by suggestions we coded suggestions that were in the form of questions as both a question (Q) and a suggestion (S). Similarly, if a suggestion was made as a response to a prior question or statement we coded both a response (R) and a suggestion (S). An example of a suggestion (S) occurred when one team member suggested new wording for the team's mission statement. This statement was also coded as a response (R).

Those statements that serve to initiate a new topic (I) or to make a suggestion (S) were considered to reflect an effort to exert leadership. Statements that are in the form of a question (Q) are often, but not always, used to exert leadership by influencing the direction of the team's discussion. Responses (R) sometimes have the potential to exert leadership, but it is often difficult to determine whether such statements play a leadership role in the team's discussion. Because each statement function can exert leadership in team meetings, the total number of statements made by each team member was used as one measure to reflect the degree to which they exerted leadership.

Coding reliability. For each of the three coding systems (decision content, decision-making processes, and statement function), coding was conducted for the data from each team by the research assistant who had conducted observations with that team and by a second graduate assistant with experience observing. Training was conducted with each system until coders achieved interrater agreement on the coding system that was consistently above 90%. After training was complete and the transcripts were coded, interrater agreement was calculated for each coding system to be

sure that coders had maintained adequate levels of accuracy (i.e., consistently above 85% agreement).

Interrater reliability was calculated for all of the coding decisions made regarding Decision content and decision-making processes (i.e., 40 decisions from the primary school team transcripts, 61 decisions from the middle school team transcripts, and 67 decisions from the high school team transcripts). For decision content, interrater agreement was 95%, 89%, and 95%, respectively for each team. For decision-making processes, interrater agreement was 88%, 89%, and 92% respectively for each team. In addition, these coding decisions were checked by a third researcher. After reliability was calculated, any disagreements were reviewed and discussed until the coders were able to reach agreement.

The number of codable statements was large (1,048 from the primary school, 2,253 from the middle school, and 3,117 from the high school transcripts). Thus, for statement function, interrater agreement was computed by numbering each statement in the transcript and then randomly selecting numbers so that at least 12% of the statements from each of the transcripts was checked for reliability. These reliability checks resulted in interrater agreement scores of 91%, 97%, and 99%, respectively for each team.

Additional Qualitative Data Sources

The data derived from the transcripts of team meetings were supplemented by four qualitative data sources. These were qualitative summaries of observations of team meetings; interviews with principals, team leaders, and other team members; meeting agendas; and researcher memos reflecting key events that occurred throughout this research. These data were used to confirm and enrich the quantitative data.

Meeting agendas. The written agendas reflected the topics that were to be discussed at each meeting. The agendas were collected for each meeting and used as a database to determine what the team planned to discuss at each meeting and to allow for an examination of the extent to which they covered what was planned at each meeting.

Summaries of all meetings of these shared decision-making teams. Field notes reflecting the content and process of decision making were developed for all the meetings of each team. Graduate research assistants and participant observers recorded narrative notes to characterize the content

(i.e., topics of conversations) and process (i.e., the involvement of principals, team leaders, and other team members in discussions and decisions) of each meeting. Based on both sets of narratives and artifacts from each meeting such as the meeting agenda, minutes, and record of attendance, the graduate assistant observers filled out a brief form summarizing the topics, decisions, and the involvement of team members. These forms were checked for accuracy by the participant observer for the team, and agreement was reached on the information reported in these forms.

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with the building principals, the team leader, one educator, and a parent from each team. A student member of the high school team was also interviewed. Interviews were conducted by university researchers, tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Team members were asked to characterize their role on the team, their views of team leadership, the strengths and weaknesses of their team, and suggestions for improving their team. They were also asked to describe the major accomplishments of their teams.

Researcher memos. Throughout this investigation, the researchers (i.e., participant observers and graduate assistant observers) recorded notes describing notable events as they occurred. These memos were written after each shared decision-making meeting and at any other time that the researchers encountered significant events connected to the district's educational reform and shared decision making. Given the long-term and persistent involvement of researchers with the district and the use of qualitative research methodology, researcher memos were an important strategy used to take advantage of the researchers' in depth knowledge of the district and its shared decision making processes (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999).

Approaches to Analysis

A first step in data analysis was to summarize participants' involvement in decisions. Each decision made by the team was coded as to decision content, decision-making processes, and whether each team member participated in the decision. The frequency of each decision content and decision-making process code was then summarized for participants as percentages. Similarly, we calculated the frequency with which each par-

ticipant made remarks that reflected different statement functions and reported this information as percentages. The percentages of decision content, decision-making processes, and statement functions are reported directly for the principal and team leader of each team. For other team members, we calculated the average percentages for other educators, parents, and students but also report the range and trends of note.

We then examined the qualitative data sources (summaries of each meeting, interview data, and researcher memos) and the meeting transcripts themselves. Findings for these data sources were summarized separately for each data source by the two researchers who observed each team. These data were then examined systematically by the research team (the two observers from each team and a third researcher) to seek confirmation and disconfirmation for the quantitative findings derived from observations.

RESULTS

Primary School Shared Decision-Making Team

Based on information contained in the agendas, meeting summaries, and researcher memos, it was determined that during the early fall meetings the team addressed the organizational structure of the team, custodial concerns, and issues related to developmentally appropriate practices and related state guidelines. During the November and December meetings, the assistant superintendent and a consultant on group process came to help give the team direction concerning its focus and procedures for building consensus. This consultant was an expert in shared decision making from the state education department who had provided earlier training on this topic to the school district. The consultant was brought in because the principal and assistant superintendent were unhappy with the progress made by the team and because some of the team members had expressed dissatisfaction with the team's group processes. In January, the principal indicated to the team members that he would assume team leadership on a temporary basis because they had not made adequate progress. This decision was inconsistent with district policy. Subsequent to this change, the team discussions focused on developing a mission statement based on developmentally appropriate practices. Over the next 3 months the team developed the mission statement and concluded its work in a final meeting where the assistant superintendent assisted the team in developing a focus for the following year.

Overview of primary school team decisions and statements. Table 1 summarizes the decision content of the primary school team and indicates that this team made 40 decisions during the two transcribed meetings. This table reveals that procedural and substantive decisions occurred with comparable frequency on the primary school team. Data reporting the frequency and types of decision-making processes are reported in Table 2, which reveals that this team used all the decision-making processes. However, the team was not characterized by a consensus style; test for consensus and implied consensus decision-making processes were used infrequently. Instead, the primary school team tended to rely on decisions that excluded input from most of the team members (e.g., handshakes and self-authorized decisions).

Data regarding the statement function of remarks made by the members of the primary school team are reported in Table 3. This table provides

TABLE 1
Substantive and Procedural Decisions for Members of Three Shared Decision-Making Teams: Average Percentages for Two Meetings per Team

	Principal (%)	*Team Leader (%)*	*Educators (%)*	*Parents (%)*	*Researcher (%)*	*Students (%)*	*Total (Frequency)*	*Total (%)*
Primary School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
SD	94	44	10	0	0	—	18	45
PD	73	45	8	0	0	—	22	55
T	83	45	9	0	0	—	40	—
Middle School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
SD	53	89	12	5	9	—	45	74
PD	19	88	17	3	13	—	16	26
T	44	89	17	5	10	—	61	—
High School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 4)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 2)		
SD	85	67	30	29	40	32	52	78
PD	67	80	7	14	13	10	15	22
T	79	70	27	26	34	27	67	—

Note. SD = Substantive Decisions; PD = Procedural Decisions; T = Total Decisions. The percentages and frequencies are average per session with the exception of the columns that reflect total frequency and total percent. The columns reflecting these totals present the total number of decisions summed across both sessions. All data for teachers, parents, and students are average percentage. Each percentage reported for team members represents the percentage of that type of decision made by that team member or for that group of team members. The percentages for each decision type do not add to 100 because each member had the potential to participate in any number of decisions (from 0% to 100% of each decision type) and because of the use of average scores for teachers, parents, and students.

TABLE 2
Decision-Making Strategies for Members of Three Shared Decision- Making Teams: Average Percentages for Two Members per Team

	Principal (%)	*Team Leader (%)*	*Educators (%)*	*Parents (%)*	*Researcher (%)*	*Students (%)*	*Total (Frequency)*	*Total (%)*
Primary School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
TC	50	75	3	0	0	—	2	10
IC	89	78	22	0	0	—	4.5	23
HS	88	38	9	0	0	—	8	40
SA	82	18	0	0	0	—	5.5	27
TD	83	45	9	0	0	—	20	—
Middle School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
TC	10	90	5	5	10	—	5	16
IC	56	93	29	8	15	—	13.5	44
HS	56	94	8	3	6	—	8	26
SA	25	63	0	0	0	—	4	13
TD	44	89	17	5	10	—	30.5	—
High School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 4)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 2)		
TC	50	50	25	33	0	50	3	9
IC	89	77	34	32	49	31	23.5	70
HS	67	83	2	9	0	9	3	9
SA	50	38	2	0	0	0	4	12
TD	79	70	27	26	34	27	33.5	—

Note. TC = Test for Consensus; IC = Implied Consensus; HS = Handshake; SA = Self-Authorized Decision; TD = Total Decisions. All data are average per session. All data for teachers, parents, and students are average percentages. Each percentage for team members refers to the percentage of that type of decision by that member or that group of members. Percentages do not add to 100 because each member had the potential to participate in any number of decisions (i.e., 0 to 100% of each decision type) and average scores were used for teachers, parents, and students.

information about the total frequency of all statements made as well as the relative use of initiation, suggestion, question or response by team members. The majority of statements on this team were responses; 10% of this team's statements reflected the initiation of a new topic.

Leadership behavior of the primary school principal. The primary school principal's voice was persistent and dominating throughout the year's shared decision-making meetings. Table 1 indicates that the principal was engaged in the vast majority of decisions made by this team when summing across both

TABLE 3
Statement Functions for Member of Three Shared Decision-Making Teams: Average Percentages for Two Meetings per Team

Functions of Statements	*Principal (%)*	*Team Leader (%)*	*Educators (%)*	*Parents (%)*	*Researchers (%)*	*Students (%)*	*Total (Frequency)*	*Total (%)*
Primary School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
I	95	5	0	0	0	—	107	10
Q	32	29	4	2	3	—	118	11
R	54	8	4	0.5	3	—	795	76
S	63	16	2.25	0	3	—	135	13
T	55	11	3.6	0.5	3	—	1,048	—
Middle School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 8)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)			
I	14	86	0	0	0	—	71	3
Q	19	38	4.6	2.5	2	—	295	13
R	28	23	5.1	1	2	—	1,804	80
S	33	24	5.1	0.5	2	—	266	12
T	27	28	4.75	1	2	—	2,253	—
High School	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 4)	(*N* = 2)	(*N* = 1)	(*N* = 2)		
I	13	75	1.5	3	0	0	132	4
Q	26	13	6	9	9	5	371	12
R	31	15	5.25	4	5	8	2,640	85
S	16	6	1.75	2.5	6	2.5	914	29
T	31	16	5	4.5	6	7.5	3,117	—

Note. I = Initiate Discussion; Q = Question; R = Response; S = Suggestion; T = Total Number of Statements. All data are average per session. All data for teachers, parents, and students are average percentages. Each percentage reported for team members refers to the percentage of that type of statement made by that team member or group of team members. Percentages for each statement function do not add to 100% because suggestions overlap with the other statement functions and because average scores are used for teachers, parents, and students.

transcribed meetings. When examining individual meetings it was found that his involvement in decisions was greater in the second transcribed meeting (participated in 100% of the team's decisions in this meeting) compared to the first transcribed meetings (participated in 60% of the team's decisions in that meeting). This trend was confirmed when examining the summaries of all this team's meetings and when examining the interview data. Reflecting about his role during an interview conducted in the spring, the principal remarked:

> At the beginning I was laying back as co-facilitator. I had to take a stronger leadership role to get things on track. I should have done that in the beginning

> because of the team's difficulty. I hope to go back to the co-facilitator role…so far having to take more of a leadership role has worked well.

Consistent with this dominant voice, the vision for the school that the principal shared during the interview was personal and did not reflect input from the team. He noted, "I was really excited about having a building that I could do something with, where I could work with the staff to do something that I think really fits with my philosophy of how children should be educated."

Table 1 also reveals that the principal of the primary school team was involved in the majority of the procedural decisions and almost all of the substantive decisions relevant to the school's movement toward a developmental focus. Table 2 further indicates this principal's dominating role in that while utilizing all four decision-making processes he executed nearly all the self-authorized (input from only one person) and handshake (input form only two team members) decisions. Furthermore, as summarized in Table 3, the principal of the primary school team dominated the meetings by speaking more than one half the time. Consistent with this pattern, the principal provided more than one half of the suggestions on this team and almost all of the topic initiations on this team. Furthermore, when considering data from the two separate transcribed meetings, the principal made 46% of the statements in the October meeting and increased to 59% of the team's statements during the January meeting. In addition, the principal was responsible for all (100%) of the topic initiations during the January meeting and for 75% of the suggestions in that meeting.

Leadership behavior of the primary school team leader. The leadership behavior of the primary school's team leader was evident, as Table 1 indicates that she participated in almost one half of the team's decisions. However, she played a role that was less dominant than that of the principal; she participated in one half as many decisions as the principal.

Participation of the primary school team leader varied when comparing her participation in meetings that occurred early in the year to those that occurred in the spring semester, and ultimately she took a limited role. She participated in almost every decision (93%) in the meeting that occurred in October and dropped to only 23% of the decisions in the January meeting when the principal indicated that he was taking over control of the team. This changing role was reflected in a review of the summaries of all this team's meetings and in the team

leader's comments in her interview: "I'm co-facilitator and I'm unclear of the purpose."

The decision content of the team leader's decisions was evenly split between procedural decisions and substantive decisions (see Table 1). Table 2 indicates that the primary school team leader was involved in all four types of decision-making processes. She participated in a majority of the decisions based on consensus. The team leader was also involved in a small number of handshake and self-authorized decisions that provided input from only one or two team members. She used these authoritative decision-making processes less frequently than the principal.

Table 3 reveals the statement function frequency scores of the team leader. The team leader was a fairly quiet member of the primary school team. A relatively high proportion of her statements were questions. Compared to the principal, she made few suggestions or topic initiations. There was a striking difference between the frequency of the team leader's statements in the first transcribed meeting (in which she made 25% of the team's statements) and the second transcribed meeting (in which she made 5% of the team's statements).

Leadership behavior of other team members. Other team members were relatively inactive, as compared to the principal and team leader. Other team members who were educators participated in 9% of decisions as noted in Table 1. The range of participation of individual educators was from 0 to 25% of decisions (note that these data for individual educators are not reported in the table which provides averages across all educators). Table 3 reveals that on average the educators made few statements, considerably fewer than did the principal and team leader.

One teacher shared her feelings saying "…this year seems a whole lot more formal than in the past and, I don't know, it seems like it is a little more difficult to share ideas." Later another team member (non-teaching staff) and a parent expressed concerns that they were not educators and did not understand some of the discussion. For example, the non-teaching staff member stated: "All of us don't know what some of the things mean."

Table 1 reveals that educators participated in about one tenth of both the substantive and procedural decisions. According to Table 2, they had limited involvement in each decision process, using all types of decisions less frequently than the principal or team leader.

Parents participated in none of the decisions. Furthermore, parents made almost no statements at either transcribed meeting. Not surpris-

ingly, parents made no initiations or suggestions; their remarks were limited to questions and responses.

The team leader was well aware of other team members' limited participation. In her interview, she noted "we have some people who don't speak up enough and need to talk up more there. Some of my friends talk afterwards but not during the meeting."

Summary of results for the primary school team. The principal used a domineering leadership style, there was dissention within the team, and observations suggested that this team was minimally effective. Evidence for the minimal effectiveness of this team included the fact that this team took a long time to agree on a mission statement, participated in a small number of decisions (in particular a small number of substantive decisions), and was able to accomplish little more than a mission statement after one year of meetings. The team leader voiced her dissatisfaction with the principal in her interview:

The principal needs to step back. He's still taking a leadership role. He has power and doesn't realize it. People don't push things because he's the center of attention. He needs to step back so people realize he's a member, not the leader of the team.

Researcher memos confirmed these conflicts between the principal and some team members. These memos noted that after several meetings, a number of team members would discuss with the researchers their frustration regarding their perceived disenfranchisement from their team's decision-making process.

Middle School Shared Decision-Making Team

A tentative mission statement was prepared by the second meeting and finalized by the third meeting in January. The education reform goals of Goals 2000 and the team guidelines from the school district and the state were discussed at these meetings as well. By February, topics for a building initiative were generated. During the spring, a survey about the initiative was developed and administered to the entire school staff, resulting in a decision for the school to focus on study skills during the following year. Toward the end of the year, a team training date was set for the fall, and there was discussion about how to link the efforts of this team to the academic goals associated with Goals 2000. The team concluded its work in June by introducing new members, reviewing the building initiative for the next

year, and reaching consensus about using an observer at team meetings in the future.

Overview of middle school team decisions and statements. Tables 1 and 2 summarize information concerning the decisions made by this team. As indicated in Table 1 this team made 61 decisions in both transcribed meetings. Table 1 presents the information concerning decision content and reveals that there were a greater number of substantive decisions compared to procedural decisions on the middle school team. As noted in Table 2, this team used all the decision-making processes. Implied consensus was the type of decision used most frequently, and the sum of test for consensus plus implied consensus accounted for 60% of the team's decisions.

The data reflecting the statement function of remarks made by members of the middle school team are reported in Table 3. Most of the statements made by this team were responses. Questions and suggestions were next with roughly the same frequency, and initiations occurred least frequently.

Leadership behavior of the middle school principal. Table 1 indicates that the principal of the middle school was involved in almost one half of the team's decisions. Although this principal sought to be actively involved in decision making and to influence the direction taken by this team, he made a concerted effort to allow the chosen team leader to assume a leadership stance and to allow other team members to participate. Support for this view is provided from an interview in which the principal stated: "I know stakeholders have to be represented by identifying people as administrator, sixth grade teacher etc., this takes away from the team. I want to be a team member with just an equal vote." Although this principal had a preconceived vision for his school, he was open to alternative viewpoints as noted by the following comment:

> My role has changed. It is not just what I'd like to see educationally, it is getting the team goals clear. Part of my role is to try to influence the team in directions I value. I also provide resources when I can. But it is ok for the team to discuss ideas I don't agree with.

As Table 1 notes, the principal of the middle school team was engaged in about one half of the substantive decisions and about one fifth of the procedural decisions. For example, this principal contributed a great deal to decisions concerning the future directions of this team and the influence

that it would have on the school. In addition, Table 2 illustrates that the principal of the middle school team was involved most frequently in implied consensus decisions and handshake decisions. Table 3 reveals that the middle school principal was an active participant making just over 25% of the team's statements. The principal made moderate use of each type of statement including topic initiations.

Leadership behavior of the middle school team leader. The leadership of the middle school's team leader is reflected in Tables 1, 2, and 3 that indicate that the leader of this team was actively involved in the team's meetings. According to Table 1, this team leader participated in almost all of the team's decisions including most of the procedural and substantive decisions. Similarly, Table 2 indicates that this team leader contributed to most of each type of decision-making process. Like the principal, this team leader made just over one fourth of the team's statements and used each type of statement function. It is noteworthy that the team leader made almost all of the topic initiations, reflecting her role running the meetings.

This active role is supported by the interview in which the team leader stated: "I have a little bit of a leadership role in the group … I share a lot of opinions…" However, this team leader shared the principal's view that it is important to attempt to involve other team members in discussions as reflected by the following comment from the interview: "I support those opinions of others in the group. I encourage them to participate."

Leadership behavior of other team members. The participation of these members was consistently less than the principal and team leader. On average, other team members who were educators participated in a moderate number of decisions (i.e., Table 1 indicates that they participated in an average of 17% of the decisions). The range for participation of individual educators was from 0 to 33% (note that these data for individual educators are not reported in the table which provides averages across all educators). Although this was lower than the principal and team leader, it is evident that some of the educators participated in a moderate number of the team's decisions.

Educators participated in moderate numbers of substantive decisions as well as procedural decisions (see Table 1). Although educators had limited involvement in three types of decision-making processes (self-authorized, handshake, and test for consensus decisions), they did participate in over one fourth of the implied consensus decisions (see Table 2). In addition, Table 3 indicates that the educators made a small number of the team's statements (average of 4.75% of the team's statements per session), and this included none of the topic initiations.

All tables indicate that parents were not active at these meetings. They participated in only 5% of the team's decisions (Table 1) and made an average of less than 1% of the team's statements per session (Table 3). Consistent with the lack of leadership exhibited by parents, they made particularly few suggestions or topic initiations (see Table 3) and were involved in very few handshake or self-authorized decisions (see Table 2).

Summary of results for the middle school team. The principal and team leader used shared leadership strategies, and there was moderate participation from the other educators on this team. While they made a relatively small number of the team's statements, some of them contributed to a number of the team's decisions. Although parents spoke a little bit at these meetings, they did not participate as actively as the other team members. Research memos confirm that while the principal attempted to share leadership, he was a substantial force in decision making. Other team members clearly paid attention to the principal's viewpoint and were reluctant to make decisions that they believed were in conflict with the principal.

This team appeared to be moderately effective during this first year of functioning as it accomplished two major tasks. First, it efficiently established a mission statement that was distributed to the school. The second major accomplishment was to determine the school's staff development initiative for the following year, and this was done based on input from the staff obtained with a survey that was developed and administered to the school by the team. Although some team members felt that the team should have accomplished more during its first year, the assistant superintendent in the district believed that this school made a good beginning.

High School Shared Decision-Making Team

The first two meetings in the fall focused on organizational structure of the team, a "getting-to-know-you" activity and the decision to review standards for teacher and student conduct. The discussion of standards continued into the winter with a draft of standards distributed in February. At this meeting, concerns about student performance on academic tests were discussed, and a decision was made to solicit guidance from a group process consultant for the next meeting. This decision was reached because team members suggested that they should have received training regarding shared decision making so that they would be as well prepared as the principal and team leader who had received prior training. The March meeting was led by the consultant who was an expert in shared de-

cision making from the state education department. The consultant administered a team development survey. Training topics were agenda setting, team membership, goal setting, use of resources of team members, distribution of leadership, and team climate. The April meeting focused on the academic goals of Goals 2000 with the decision to develop a list of assessment tools for these academic goals. The team concluded its work in May by establishing membership guidelines and deciding to focus on the Goals 2000 learning outcomes during the following year.

Overview of high school team decisions and statements. As indicated in Table 1, this team made 67 decisions during the two transcribed meetings and engaged in substantially more substantive than procedural decisions. Table 2 indicates that this team relied primarily on implied consensus decisions and used the other three decision-making processes relatively infrequently.

Similar to the other teams, Table 3 indicates that the majority of statements made by the high school team were responses. Suggestions were the next most frequent type of statement followed by questions and then topic initiations.

Leadership behavior of the high school principal. On this team, the principal's voice was a consistent and active force for change that attempted to influence team decision making. This conclusion is supported by the data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 as well as the meeting summaries and researcher memos. Table 1 indicates that the principal was involved in the majority of the team's total decisions, including both substantive and procedural decisions. Table 2 indicates that the principal participated in a substantial percentage of each decision process. Further support for this principal's active involvement is found in Table 3 that indicates that he made over 30% of the team's statements, and this was distributed across all four types of statement functions.

Leadership behavior of the high school team leader. The team leader was an active participant in team discussions and decisions. Table 1 reveals that the team leader was involved in the majority of the team's total decisions, substantive decisions, and procedural decisions. In addition, Table 2 indicates that the team leader used all of the decision processes, participating in almost all of the implied consensus and handshake decisions. Although the team leader was involved in a very large percentage of deci-

sions, she did not make a comparable number of statements (see Table 3). The team leader's leadership role in running the meeting is underscored by the high percentage of topic initiations that she made as well as her participation in almost all of the procedural decisions.

Leadership behavior of other team members. Although other team members were less active participants than the principal or team leader, they still contributed in a meaningful manner to team discussions and decisions. On the average, other team members who were educators participated in more than one fourth of the decisions as noted in Table 1. The range for participation of individual educators was from 5 to 54% of decisions (note that these data for individual educators are not reported in the table which provides averages across all educators). Although this was lower than the principal and team leader, it represents a meaningful contribution to decision making by the other educators on this team.

On average, other educators participated in more substantive than procedural decisions (see Table 1). In addition, Table 2 reveals that they participated almost exclusively in decisions based on consensus (i.e., test for consensus or implied consensus). Other educators made a moderate number of the team's statements as Table 3 reveals that on average they made 5% of these statements using a greater percentage of questions and responses than initiations or suggestions.

Parents also made a meaningful contribution to these meetings as Table 1 indicates that on average they participated in over one fourth of the team's decisions. Similar to the other educators, parents participated in more substantive decisions than procedural decisions (see Table 1). In addition, similar to the pattern for other educators, parents participated primarily in decision-making processes that were based on consensus (see Table 2). Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that on average parents made a small number of statements (average of 4.5% of statements) relying on a slightly higher percentage of questions and responses than topic initiations or suggestions.

The pattern of contributions made by students to the high school team was similar to that of parents and other educators. Students contributed to over one fourth of the decisions and to a higher percentage of the substantive than procedural decisions (see Table 1). In addition, Table 2 indicates that they relied primarily on decisions based on consensus, and Table 3 reveals that they made, on average, a small but meaningful percentage of the team's statements. Thus, although educators, parents, and students participated actively in the meetings, they

did not exert a major leadership role on this team when compared with the principal and team leader.

Summary of results for the high school team. The data collected in this investigation suggest that the high school team functioned relatively well. For example, this team reached major decisions relatively quickly. In addition, this team made a large number of decisions, including a rather large number of substantive decisions, as it reached agreement about the team mission and developed a revised code of conduct for the students and teachers in the school.

The principal attempted to influence the high school team by participating in most of the decisions and making a substantial percentage of the team's statements. However, he was a force for change who attempted to influence team decision making without inhibiting the participation of others. Thus, while he contributed frequently to decisions, the chosen team leaders, other educators, parents, and students all contributed to decision making in meaningful ways as well. To accomplish this, the team relied primarily on implied consensus decisions. Support for this finding was obtained from the principal's interview as he reflected on his role in the team with the following comment:

> It is most important to develop a team spirit. … I think my participation makes a difference. I try not to over participate. I try not to influence, but I can't help but feel that because of my traditional role and the way that this role is viewed that my non-participation sends messages to people. I see myself taking less and less of a role.

The importance of allowing other voices on this team was demonstrated by a student who stated: "I know my opinion counts. They want to know what I have to say because I am representing the whole student body."

DISCUSSION

Comparisons of the three teams illustrate variability in efforts to implement shared decision making (i.e., variability in use of facilitative power through shared leadership and encouraging the development of shared goals), and this confirms findings from one prior study (Kannapel, Moore, Coe, & Aagaard, 1995). In addition, these findings suggest hypotheses for future research about individual differences among teams and the relation-

ships for variables such as facilitative power, shared leadership, and shared goals with team effectiveness. If these hypotheses are confirmed in future research, this might help to explain prior research that has reported mixed results regarding the efficacy of shared decision making (i.e., Goldman et al., 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Malen et al., 1990).

These hypotheses derive from the data indicating that the primary school team functioned differently than the two other teams in the use of shared leadership as measured by the decision-making processes (i.e., self-authorized, handshake, implied consensus, and test for consensus decisions), team member participation in discussions, and the function of statements (i.e., topic initiations, questions, responses, and suggestions). The middle school and high school teams appeared to use relatively effective decision-making processes. In contrast to the primary school team, these two teams (particularly the high school team) had active involvement from all team members including the parents, and their team leaders exercised leadership to influence decision making (particularly the middle school team). In addition, unlike the primary school team, with a dominating principal, these two teams developed goals for their school based on input from a range of educators. Furthermore, it appears that these two teams made more decisions (particularly more substantive decisions), reached decisions more quickly, and were more efficient at accomplishing their goals for the year. Future research is needed to determine whether these approaches to shared leadership consistently result in effective outcomes for shared decision-making teams.

The Impact of Facilitative Power

Our research provides preliminary support for prior theory (Hart, 1995; Hoy & Tarter, 1993; Mohrman et al., 1978) and research (Goldman et al., 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996) suggesting that facilitative power can promote effective implementation of shared decision making. These data also make an important contribution to the literature by using observational strategies to operationalize facilitative power in terms of decision-making processes (self-authorized, handshake, implied consensus and test for consensus decisions), team member participation in discussion, and the function of statements made by team members (i.e., topic initiation, question, response, and suggestion). Comparisons between team members, team leaders, and administrators in terms of the frequency with which they exhibit these behaviors can help to delineate the use of facilitative power. For example, teams with teachers and parents who participate in many deci-

sions and contribute a number of statements during discussions show evidence of using facilitative power.

Role ambiguity and conflict. Role ambiguity and role conflict appeared to be related to the use of facilitative power and to be significant factors in the unfolding stories of these shared decision-making teams, a conclusion that supports prior research (Bredeson, 1993, 1994; Clift et al., 1995; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). This had especially counterproductive effects for the primary school principal who had great difficulty using shared leadership strategies and eventually took over control of his team. Although the other principals were able to use shared leadership strategies, the interview data suggest that they had to overcome feelings of ambivalence about shared leadership and power. These findings echo other research suggesting that principals accustomed to a solo role may voice support for shared decision making but feel conflicted about and/or lack the know-how or desire to share power (Blase & Blase, 1999; Bredeson, 1994; Weiss, 1993).

It is not only school administrators who may experience difficulty sharing power. Teachers, staff, and parents (even students) may be untrained, reluctant, and uncertain about using newfound power in shared decision making (Clift et al., 1995). This is congruent with our finding that team members expressed lack of clarity concerning their roles and the power of shared decision-making teams. Interviews of the team leaders revealed that educators were uncertain about whether the district administration was willing to consider seriously teachers' ideas about educational reform that might result from shared decision-making teams. It is possible that the school district's prior reputation for top-down decision making prompted these concerns. The team leader from the middle school team indicated: "Some of us are not clear about our role in the district, whether we just recommend change or are a change power. The degree of power is unclear." The team leader from the high school team stated: "We are not really sure of our purpose. We thought we'd set new goals. …The (team) will hit a stone wall if we feel our efforts are not important. It will all be for nothing and a lot of people will be discouraged."

Parents as decision makers. This investigation supports prior research indicating that involving parents in shared decision making can be difficult to accomplish (Brown, 1990; Brown & Hunter, 1998), and this may also have some relationship to the use of facilitative power. Similar to other team roles, the present research found variability in parent participation

across teams. The primary school team had the least parent participation, and this may have occurred because of the more effective use of facilitative power observed in the middle school and high school teams (e.g., sharing decisions by encouraging the use of consensus-based decision-making processes). It is also possible that differences in parents' prior experience in the school culture could influence their active involvement. It has been suggested that intimidating jargon and perceived low status can inhibit participation of noneducators (Weiss, 1993) and our data provide some support for this hypothesis.

The Impact of School Vision

A school's vision can provide a focus and direction for the school and a lens or filter through which members of shared decision-making teams view their personal connection to the team's decision-making process (Conley & Goldman, 1994; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Louis & Miles, 1990). Shared decision making can be difficult for principals with strong personal visions when these personal visions conflict with efforts to establish a shared belief system or vision that drives the team (Conley & Goldman, 1994; Lynn, 1994).

This investigation supports this conclusion as a common vision provided a focus for the two teams that were efficient in accomplishing their goals (i.e., the middle school and high school teams) but not for the team that had difficulty accomplishing its goals (i.e., the primary school team). Frustrated by the lack of vision on her team, one member of the primary school team stated in an interview: "I feel there is no leadership on the planning team. Not enough thought is put into the decisions we are supposed to be making. The administration in the building doesn't know what we are supposed to be talking about. (The principal's) vision has been stated, but on the surface." Although this team member felt a lack of vision for the team, the principal talked enthusiastically about his personal philosophy during the January meeting. His possessiveness or ownership for this vision may have been perceived as excluding teachers and parents from a negotiated set of goals (see Conley & Goldman, 1994). In contrast, the principals of the middle school and the high school teams attempted to facilitate their team's efforts to develop a vision for the school that might be supported by the entire faculty, rather than imposing their own personal visions on the team (Clift et. al., 1995; Goldman et al., 1993; Johnson & Pajares, 1996; Louis & Miles, 1990).

Implications of Organizational and Systems Issues

Educational reforms such as shared decision making are complex phenomena that are difficult to understand and challenging to implement effectively. Systemic conceptualization can facilitate understanding of educational change and lead to maximally effective reforms (e.g., Fullan, 1996; Meyers & Nastasi, 1999; Sarason & Lorentz, 1998). Several organizational factors may have been relevant to the present reform efforts, and these merit future study. These include history of reform efforts, size of the school or district, school level, key characteristics of administration, and communication about educational reforms.

History may have influenced this educational reform because of past experiences in which the district sought teacher input that was subsequently ignored. As a result, teachers were slow to accept the shared decision-making process. This probably had a particular impact on the primary school because of the district's recent shift to developmentally structured schools that forced one half of the faculty in that building to move from their prior school.

Size of the school or school district may have an impact on efforts to implement educational reforms, particularly those that involve shared decision making. The district that was the subject of this research was relatively small. This had the potential to facilitate school reform efforts because a large percentage of educators had the opportunity to be involved in the shared decision-making efforts.

School level (i.e., primary school, intermediate elementary school, middle school, high school) may have an impact on shared decision making. In our research team use of shared leadership strategies appeared to have a more important impact on shared decision-making teams than school level. However, because only three schools were used, school level was confounded with the teams' use of shared leadership. Further research is needed to tease out the potential impact of school level and shared leadership strategies.

The characteristics of school administration can have substantial effects on educational reform, and this appeared to be the case in our research. This district had a new assistant superintendent who was hired to facilitate educational reform efforts in the district. Furthermore, the superintendent was close to retirement and gave a good deal of power about these issues to the assistant superintendent. Because this new administrator came from outside the school district, she did not share the reputation of ignoring staff input. This afforded an opportunity to obtain staff support. Furthermore, the assistant superintendent provided a range of visible support to

the reform efforts including regular meetings with team leaders and principals to encourage and strengthen their reform efforts and annual meetings with the parents, community leaders, and school staff to report on the positive efforts to implement reforms.

Finally, communication can help to build and maintain systemic support for educational reforms. This research illustrated a number of strategies for maintaining regular communication about the reform efforts throughout the district. This included use of newsletters, annual meetings about the reforms, bulletin board presentations of progress made, ongoing supervisory meetings with those responsible for implementing reforms, and providing updates from reform teams as regular agenda items at various meetings of school faculty.

Implications of the Methodology and Limitations of the Research

This research used both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the functioning of three shared decision-making teams in their first year of operation. The use of multiple data sources that include systematic direct observations provided a description of the decision making and distribution of power on these teams. Conclusions from this research must be interpreted with caution given the small number of teams studied early in their development.

The qualitative methodology included active involvement from the researchers who conducted observations, maintained researcher memos, contributed to data analysis, and served as participants in the system. The researchers' in-depth knowledge of this school system and its reform teams served to strengthen the data and resultant conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Schensul et al., 1999), but it is acknowledged that the use of participant observers and researcher memos may have the potential for contributing biased information. The use of multiple data sources and multiple researchers (triangulation), as well as the prolonged engagement and persistent observation by the researchers, were designed to minimize such bias and create an accurate portrait of these teams (Lincoln & Guba, 1995; Schensul et al., 1999). Finally, because this research investigated shared decision-making teams that included participant researchers, any attempt to generalize these findings to shared decision-making teams without such participants must be done with caution.

Implications for Educators Implementing Shared Decision Making

Our data point to the potential importance of establishing a shared vision, because only the two teams guided by a consensually developed mission appeared to work productively. This recommendation is supported by some of the prior school reform literature (i.e., Goldman et al., 1993). Although we agree with Fullan (1996) that often such visions change, our findings suggest that it is an important component of the team-building process to begin by creating a shared vision. In addition to setting a direction for the team, the process of establishing a shared vision can be an instrumental step in initiating and legitimizing shared leadership and shared power on the team.

As noted elsewhere, training may be an important factor in effective team decision making (Weiss, 1993). Our data suggest that these teams could have all benefitted from additional training. However, according to our experience it can be difficult to provide training that makes a meaningful impact on shared decision-making teams. Training needs to be presented over time, and it needs to include strategies for assessment of practice. Educational consultants could provide such training.

This study indicates that one potentially effective approach to complement training of shared decision-making teams would be to use observations of team decision making to provide feedback to teams. If principals and team leaders were aware of the nature or pattern of their contributions to shared decision making, they could use these data to modify their behaviors. For instance, if they relied on self-authorized decisions or handshakes (as was the case with the primary school team), they could increase their use of decision-making processes based on consensus. Or, if they made a high percentage of the team's statements, they might decrease their amount of talk to encourage participation from other team members. Data-based feedback could also be provided based on summaries of interview and survey data.

Our experience as participant observers suggests that streamlined data collection procedures could be used by school consultants who work as participant observers or by team members who are trained to carry out this role. This can be accomplished by having participant observers fill out the "brief form" summarizing meeting topics, decisions, and the involvement of team members and by using interviews similar to those described in this research (copies can be obtained by contacting the first author). In fact, during subsequent years the teams observed in this research decided to include team observation as a regular role for at least one team member.

Time was left at the end of each meeting to report these data to the team. A school consultant or a team member in the participant-observer role could use observational data to provide a feedback loop (Clift et. al., 1995) that could strengthen the team's shared decision making (Weiss, 1993).

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