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# School Based Decision Making

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School Based Decision Making  
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## What does the law require?

The 1989 Task Force on Education Reform adopted 12 systemic principles used in drafting the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). One of the principles formed the basis for School Based Decision Making (SBDM). It stated: "School accountability and school-based authority are two intertwined parts of the same proposition" (Foster, 1999; Task Force on Education Reform, 1989, p. 2). In other words, once the Task Force selected schools as the unit for the commonwealth's new accountability and assessment system, the General Assembly agreed that schools should have statutory authority to plan and make policy addressing achievement of accountability goals. The legislation mandating SBDM in conjunction with KERA's other systemic features was enacted in 1990 and codified as KRS § 160.345.

Despite a tendency in some regions of Kentucky to refer to SBDM as "site-based", the Task Force's principle connecting school accountability to school authority clarifies KERA's statutory focus on *school-based*, rather than mere site-based, decision making. Other programmatic, educational sites, such as vocational or alternative schools, may choose to practice some form of decentralized decision making strategies, but the law only requires SBDM for schools held accountable under the state's assessment and accountability system (KRS § 160.345 (1) (b)).

The 1990 legislation exempted schools from implementing SBDM by 1996 under only two conditions: (1) if the school served as the only school in the district and (2) if the school's scores on the state's assessment exceeded the state-assigned accountability threshold index<sup>1</sup>. Under the second condition, a school with earned scores at the level exempting it from the SBDM mandate, the law requires that the two constituencies of teachers and parents vote to request exemption approval from the State Board of Education (KRS § 160.345 (5)).

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, the state's accountability system is under revision. As a result, the accountability threshold will probably become known as the assistance line.

The 1990 legislation specified role-based membership within councils to include three teacher representatives, two parent representatives, and the principal. Schools may choose to develop alternative models, but they must receive approval from the state board of education (KRS § 160.345 (7)). To date, 62 models have been approved ([www.kde.state.ky/olsi/leaders/sbdm/stats.asp](http://www.kde.state.ky/olsi/leaders/sbdm/stats.asp)). Under the statute, many high schools have taken advantage of the provision for increased membership in the form of "double" councils that maintain the role-member proportions with six teachers, four parents and two administrators (KRS § 160.345 (2) (a)).

In 1994, the Kentucky General Assembly added provisions for minority representation to councils in schools with an enrolled student population of at least 8% in the previous school year. In effect, this may raise the council membership to eight, if the parents elect another minority representative leading the teachers to hold another election to maintain their majority on the council (KRS § 160.345 (2) (b) 2. a. & b.).

Initially, council members could only serve one-year, unlimited, successive terms. In 1994, the legislature allowed councils to opt for one- or two-year terms with no succession possible under the two-year provision. Legislation in 1994 also required that both new and experienced council members receive state-approved training on the processes of SBDM (KRS § 160.345(6)).

While important stakeholders such as non-certified staff and students are not included as official SBDM Council members, they are cited as potential SBDM committee members in Kentucky Department of Education support materials (KRS § 160.345 (2) (c) 2; *Synergy*, 1994; *Synergy CD-ROM*, 1999). If Councils practice consensus rather than voting, these non-recognized groups' voices may have as much weight as the statutorily recognized SBDM representatives (*Synergy*, 1994; *Synergy CD-ROM*, 1999).

The SBDM legislation gave generous authority to SBDM Councils for the following policy areas:

- curriculum
- daily school schedule
- assignment of students to programs and classes
- activities that fit the [local] school board's designation of the academic calendar and daily start and dismissal times
- use of school space

- instructional practices
- discipline and classroom management
- extracurricular programs including students participation
- and procedures consistent with state standards and local board policy, technology use, and program appraisal. (KRS § 160.345 (2) I (1-9))

In addition to these policies, councils must make decisions concerning their own by-laws and procedures (KRS § 160.345 (2) (e)), instructional materials including textbooks (KRS § 160.345 (2) (g)), and budget including staff salaries (KRS § 160.345 (2) (f)), professional development and other programmatic expenditures (Salyers, 1996; *Synergy*, 1994, *Synergy CD-ROM*, 1999). Besides control of the building budget, perhaps the most significant decisions relegated to SBDM by legislation were personnel issues that included the following:

- selection of principals (KRS § 160.345, (2) (h)),
- allocation of positions and job classification within the allotted budget from the district and state (KRS § 160.345 (2) (f)), and
- "consultation" with the principal in the selection and hiring of both certified and classified staff (KRS § 160.345 (2) (h)).

Given Kentucky's historic local district corruption, the Kentucky General Assembly deliberately shifted personnel decisions to the school-level to institute more equitable hiring practices statewide (Caudill, 1963; Foster, 1999; Holland, 1998; Miller, 1994; Steffy, 1993). In 1998, the General Assembly took steps to ensure that principals did not bypass school councils in the hiring of either teachers or classified staff. As a stopgap until the 2000 Legislative Session, legislators used an amendment to the state budget bill to require that SBDM policies define "consultation with councils" (HB 321; KRS § 160.345 (2) (h)).

The Kentucky legislature required full implementation of SBDM by July 1, 1996. During the phase-in period of 1990 through 1996, numerous disputes over the interpretation and practice of SBDM broke out. Between 1993 and 1995, the Kentucky Department of Education provided 14 Program Reviews and Advisories on establishing SBDM and creating SBDM policies. By 1997, Kentucky Attorney General's Office had issued 34 advisory opinions on SBDM definitions and procedures. The 1998 edition of *Kentucky School Laws Annotated* lists seven different court decisions pertaining to the jurisdiction and practice of SBDM. Despite divergence in interpretations which led to

these numerous legal opinions, the effects of all these actions have been to uphold the structure and functions of decentralized decision making at the school level as established under the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act. From its inception, school based decision making has maintained substantial commitment and support from all three branches of state government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

## What has been implemented?

As the Kentucky Department of Education's statistics on SBDM show, implementation is virtually a moot issue. Only 18 schools in Kentucky chose exemption from SBDM due to test scores and only eight more do not operate councils since they represent single-school districts. The remaining 1238, or 98%, of Kentucky's schools operate SBDM councils as required since 1996. Many of these schools are eligible for exemption because of good assessment results, but continue to operate SBDM Councils.

Although the Kentucky Department of Education maintains current records on SBDM Councils and members, it has reduced much of its support to school councils since 1998. Part of the support eroded after 1997 when KDE shifted research and evaluation money from KERA-based division offices to the Commissioner's office. Also, with KDE's reorganization in 1998, Regional Service Centers no longer provide consultants whose sole responsibilities support SBDM functions.

One could argue that maintenance of SBDM should not require as much state support as the initial phases of implementation. Nevertheless, in its *1998 Annual Report*, the Legislative Research Commission's Office of Education Accountability (OEA) reported a slight increase in complaints, which it attributed to an increase in SBDM Councils, but also may have reflected the removal of RSCs from specific technical support for SBDM. OEA's next report suggested that the number and types of complaints and disputes relating to SBDM has remained steady since 1992 (OEA, 1999).

Currently the Kentucky Department of Education provides technical support for SBDM in three ways. First, KDE continues to consult an external advisory committee consisting of representatives of various groups associated with SBDM from professional organizations to parent groups, from individual teachers to superintendents, and from

independent providers of SBDM training to higher education professors. The diversity of this advisory group makes it unique among the other single-constituency advisory groups currently associated with KDE. Secondly, unlike the other areas of systemic reform required by the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act, KDE maintains a list of "endorsed" trainers who are sanctioned to provide the legally mandated SBDM council member training. While local school districts employ many of these trainers, a sizable number are independent professional development providers. None are employees of the Kentucky Department of Education. The third provision of technical support is a small three-person branch office in Frankfort. Among the duties of these individuals is the provision of on-demand technical information to all 1238 SBDM Councils and their committees (involving approximately 49,000 people statewide). As a means of moderating the demand for information, this branch has converted best practice information about SBDM as well as the above-noted plethora of legal notes to a CD-ROM format (*Synergy CD-ROM*, 1999). *Synergy CD-ROM's* technical information is also available on the KDE's web-site ([www.kde.state.ky.us](http://www.kde.state.ky.us)). The SBDM branch also issues a monthly newsletter, *Common Agenda*, providing technical assistance on hot topics facing SBDM Councils and their committees.

What have been the effects of the program area on students, schools, school districts, communities, educators, governmental agencies, and the public?

Due to a lack of comprehensive evaluation data on SBDM, no one can answer definitively any questions concerning the reform's effects on any group or agency. Speculation, opinions, and anecdotes are plenty, but no single, reliable source of data, analysis, or interpretation currently exists. Yet compared to other aspects of the 1990 reform, a considerable database describing localized SBDM efforts and initiatives prevails.

The majority of research reported on SBDM derives from nearly 30 dissertations issued by various universities within and outside of Kentucky. At least seven professors associated with the University of Kentucky's Department of Administration and Supervision have contributed more than 25 published reports on SBDM. The Prichard

Committee on Academic Excellence also underwrote a series of updates from 1990 through 1995. As a portion of a general study of Kentucky's education reform, the Appalachian Education Lab provided at least eight summaries of SBDM functions in specific school districts from 1991 through 1995. SBDM continues to be a subsection of the annual surveys (1994 to 1999) of public opinion on KERA conducted by Wilkerson & Associates for the Kentucky Institute on Education Research. From 1993 through 1995, the Kentucky Department of Education conducted three statewide opinion surveys concerning SBDM. Then from 1996 through 1997, KDE subcontracted at least twice for statewide studies of SBDM, but the reports were not released. Sources on SBDM are plentiful, but unfortunately these reports also can be characterized as fragmented, non-evaluative, non-generalizable, and thus only partially informative.

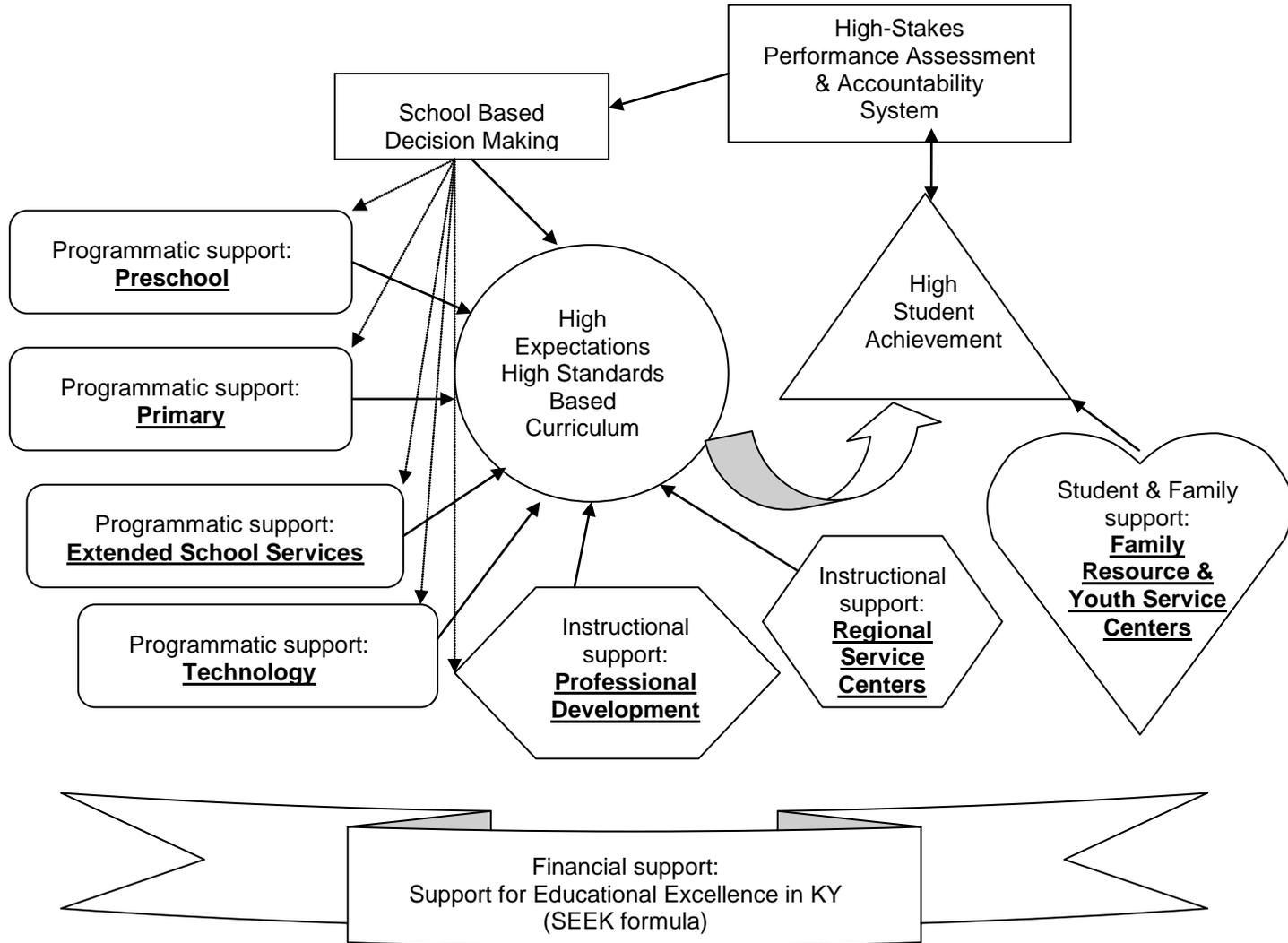
Nevertheless, some description of SBDM features emerges from these data sources. The following describes findings of SBDM studies relevant to each group associated with schools.

### SBDM & Students

As noted in a previous review of Kentucky's SBDM, the connection between governance and student achievement or student life has not been established in Kentucky or elsewhere (Lindle, 1997). In fact the systemic nature of Kentucky's reform prevents attribution of effects to any single feature (Rinehart & Lindle, 1997). Figure 1 depicts the complexity of Kentucky's systemic reform design including the interaction of cause-effect relations among the systemic features.

Figure 1 shows that the foundation for Kentucky's reform is the Support Educational Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding formula. This formula supports operational allocations in all Kentucky's schools, but it also provides specific lines for portions of the reform initiative intended to increase student achievement.

Figure 1



As illustrated in Figure 1, Kentucky's design centers on better curriculum and instruction leading to higher student achievement, a high standards-based model. To monitor schools' progress toward this outcome, Kentucky chose a high stakes assessment and accountability system described elsewhere in this *Review of Research*. This volume also provides reviews of each of the supporting features: from the four programmatic supports of (1) preschool, (2) primary, (3) extended school services, and (4) technology to instructional supports such as professional development and the Regional Service Centers. Yet another chapter herein devotes attention to a student support mechanism, the Family Resource/Youth Services Centers.

For the purposes of this chapter's analysis of SBDM, the figure provides a clear focus on the ways SBDM performs at the periphery of Kentucky's high standards-high student performance systemic design. While all SBDM councils receive reports from the commonwealth's high-stakes assessment and accountability system, SBDM's actions are primarily supportive through programmatic and instructional policies or plans. As a supportive measure, SBDM is not at the center of the relationship between instruction/curriculum and student achievement because teachers and students are central to these efforts.

Despite the fact that SBDM is not the central influence on student achievement, it is a potentially powerful behind-the-scenes influence. The complexity displayed in Figure 1 illustrates the multiple avenues for SBDM to exert influence on the teaching-learning relationship.

Yet, given this complexity, the subtleties and indirect nature of governance could mask casual observers' views of SBDM's connections to school and student performance. A recent conference held by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence illustrates the way in which SBDM influences could be summarily dismissed, as four out of five conference attendees could not name any way in which SBDM Councils had helped student achievement (Jane David, personal communication, November 1999).

Nevertheless, while parents and others are more informed about schools through SBDM, questions remain about the degree to which any of Kentucky's school councils have made concerted efforts to address academic practices (Office of Educational Accountability, 1998; Prichard Committee, 1999). A few recent studies portray the

difficulty in ascertaining the connection between school council processes and student or school performance.

Rinehart and Lindle's (1997) research used a randomly selected sample of 45 schools stratified by level (elementary, middle and high school). Independent variables included percent of free and reduced lunch students, extent of services from a Family Resource/Youth Services Center, and the length of time during which the school's SBDM Council had existed. The 1995-96 results from the state's assessment provided the independent variable. A standard regression technique attributed virtually no influence on the assessment scores from the use of FRYSCs or SBDM. Not surprisingly, elementary schools with more affluent student populations scored better on the 95-96 assessment. The researchers concluded that the regression model probably was too limited in the number and measurement of variables since only 17% of the overall variance was explained. The unexplained variance might be accounted for by other systemic initiatives in Kentucky's reform. The researchers suggested that subsequent studies more directly measure qualitative aspects of all KERA's initiatives (Rinehart & Lindle, 1997). The researchers decried the limitations of research design associated with systemic reform as opposed to suggesting that single initiatives were inadequate, a stance that has been documented with the evaluation of federal systemic initiatives as well (Corcoran, 1997; LeMahieu, 1997; Sebring & Bryk, 1993; Shadish, 1993; Weiss, 1997).

The above study substantiates the frustratingly small body of evidence on SBDM's connections to student performance. In the last review of SBDM (Lindle, 1997), only one study had been attempted in the early years (1992-94) of reform in connecting student performance on non-state assessments to SBDM. The study, underwritten by the Kentucky School Boards Association, purported to show that non-SBDM schools had to that date showed higher ACT scores, higher monetary rewards on the state assessment, and lower dropout rates (Coogle, 1995/6). This study was roundly criticized for failing to account for powerful intervening variables and ignoring the full design of KERA's systemic reform initiatives (Guskey, 1995).

Other researchers have attempted to measure ancillary aspects of student life affected by SBDM. In a 1994 dissertation completed through Seton Hall University, Szabo surveyed 110 Kentucky secondary principals who reported no difference in student

participation in extra-curricular activities or dropout rates since the implementation of SBDM in their schools.

In separate dissertations from Ohio University and the University of Alabama respectively, Hoskins (1995) and Lee (1995) also used survey methodology to describe, among other perceptions, teachers' and principals' opinions of the effects of SBDM on students. Hoskins found no difference in teachers' and principals' perceptions of the benefits of SBDM to students. He noted that both groups were generally positive, but the realities might be different from students' perspectives (Hoskins, 1995). Lee's results also were positive in the direction of student benefits due to SBDM. Her comparison of principals' perceptions in Kentucky and Georgia revealed little difference in beliefs that SBDM improved student achievement (Lee, 1995).

One dissertation from Southern Illinois University included student responses concerning SBDM (Patmor, 1998). Patmor surveyed students and council members in 25 high schools with a low response rate of about 20%. In those locations, he found general agreement between students and principals that students should have a voice in school decisions. Other council members (parents and teachers) were significantly less supportive of student voices. Only one-third of these 25 schools indicated that students were included in committee activities or other decision-making processes.

The low response rate necessitates caution in interpreting this study, a caution that can be offered about all four of these survey-based dissertations. These dissertations essentially rely on self-reports and opinions and offer little hard data about the utility of SBDM in addressing student performance or student life.

Using a different, but equally limited methodology, a 1996 qualitative study produced a dissertation from the University of Maryland and focused on opinions about the effects of SBDM on special education students. Schofield visited three Kentucky school districts and met with SBDM council members from three schools in each district. She described SBDM's effects on special education as high in potential, but relatively low in effects at the time of the study. Most SBDM Council members felt under-trained and ill-informed about special education requirements or issues. Even special education teachers who served as council members were hesitant to assert special education issues

because they felt they were not well-versed in special education law and regulations (Schofield, 1996).

Sumner's 1999 dissertation from the University of Kentucky focused on the discipline policies of middle schools. Her two-phased study first identified different prototypes of discipline policies mailed to her by Kentucky middle schools. The prototypes ranged from those that relied solely on local school board discipline codes to others that SBDM Councils had specifically designed for their own schools. In the second phase of the study, Sumner visited three middle schools observing discipline and interviewing, teachers, students, parents, and principals about discipline issues. She found poor communication about SBDM policies, where they existed, among SBDM Councils, principals, students, and parents. In general, discipline was administered in a disjointed hierarchy. Teachers often did not know what happened to students they sent to the principals. Principals were not fully informed about what infractions students had committed when they were sent to the office. Parents also were not part of the communication loop. Often the practice of discipline did not follow the policy. Despite an assumption that SBDM makes the school community more aware of school policy, communication remains a challenge for SBDM's design and execution of discipline policy (Sumner, 1999).

In terms of student effects associated with SBDM, little has changed since the 1996 review of SBDM (Lindle, 1997). Existing studies rely heavily on opinions in ascertaining the effects of SBDM on students. No study has been designed or conducted with adequate resources to address the complex and supporting, yet peripheral, role of SBDM in Kentucky's systemic reform. Studies have emerged that illustrate the necessity of sophisticated research designs that can account for the indirect and interactional effects of governance on student performance and student life.

### SBDM, Schools & School Districts

The effects of SBDM on schools and school districts remain largely undocumented by research. Some effects could be inferred from the number of Attorney General's opinions and court cases cited earlier in this review. For example, an early court case, *Boone County Board of Education v. Bushee* (1994) served as a strong signal

of the courts' commitment to school-level authority. In the *Bushee* decision, the court made it clear that Councils do not require approval from the local school board in the legislated policy areas. However, due to the complexity of systemic design described above, the effects on schools and school districts have not been studied. School activities focused on SBDM have been reported. These activity studies generally focus on what councils do and how they do it.

As noted in an early review of SBDM, two reports have been filed concerning the effects of SBDM specifically on vocational curriculum. Logan reported that vocation and academic curricula remained essentially separate and unchanged, but that teachers from both areas reported better relationships (Logan, 1992, Logan & Byers, 1995).

The Kentucky Department of Education made at least two attempts to identify school changes that might be associated with SBDM. In 1996, KDE requested that 200 schools that had achieved rewards across two accountability cycles share their insights about their successes. Ninety schools (45%) responded with unstructured accounts of their schools' features. KDE's analysis suggested five common characteristics:

- focus on results
- student-centered programs
- clear, focused communications
- effective use of resources
- shared ownership and pride (McDonald, 1997, p.1).

Although all five traits look similar to the activities supposedly associated with SBDM, many of these schools did not have SBDM Councils due to their exemption under the law. Those that had chosen to implement SBDM, frequently did not report their participation given the unstructured nature of KDE's data request (Kentucky Department of Education, 1997).

As a result of this oversight, the then-Division for School-Based Decision-Making at the Kentucky Department of Education developed its own study for ascertaining the contributions of SBDM to school success. Fifty-three schools were identified that had reward status over two accountability cycles and also established SBDM not later than the 1992-93 school year and had the highest accountability scores in their categorical level of schooling (elementary, middle or secondary). Forty-three schools allowed KDE staff to conduct interviews concerning SBDM operations. Among other features

generated in a profile of successful schools operating SBDM, most of the schools had addressed all nine areas of policy. The most common policy area was discipline with curriculum in second place (Kentucky Department of Education, 1998). This preoccupation with SBDM practices may not illuminate school effects *per se*, but such description of practices may hold insight into the means for improving school and student performance.

KDE commissioned another SBDM activities study at the same time as its own investigation of successful schools. The Eastern Kentucky University study, which is yet to be promulgated by KDE, focused on SBDM minutes in order to ascertain the content of school council decisions. In an analysis of a regionally stratified, random sample of 137 SBDM Councils' minutes during the 1996-97 school year, the researchers found that most of the decisions dealt with budget and personnel issues, rather than the nine policy areas focused on instruction and learning. Elementary schools noted fewer curriculum decisions in their minutes. High schools and middle schools noted more decisions about discipline in their minutes. This analysis also revealed considerable variation in the detail and consistency of filing minutes across schools (Austin, Burns & Klecker, 1998).

These three KDE studies tend to substantiate earlier work that suggested that SBDM councils' attention to material issues focused on instruction and curriculum has been negligible. Research on the start-up activities of SBDM council showed inordinate attention to marginal matters such as by-laws and personnel issues rather than instructional and curriculum policy (AEL, 1993; Coe, Kannapel, Aagaard & Moore, 1995a, b; David, 1992, 1993, 1994; Kannapel, Moore, Coe & Aagaard, 1995; Lindle, 1996; Martin, 1995; Prichard Committee, 1995; Read, 1994).

Reverting to perceptual data about SBDM's effects on school practices versus its role in implementing state-mandated change, Brown's 1997 dissertation found that both middle school principals and teachers saw SBDM in a mediating role for curriculum changes and instructional practices. Both groups perceived that curriculum and instruction were driven by state mandates and the state's assessment design rather than school-level innovations. Brown's conclusions echo the systemic issues identified above with trying to attribute changes in student performance to SBDM (Brown, 1997).

These SBDM activity studies also are vaguely reminiscent of earlier work by the Kentucky Institute on Education Research. In 1995, KIER developed Innovation Component Configuration Maps (ICCM) for each KERA initiative. KIER modeled the ICCM on change implementation studies by Gene Hall and Shirley Hord (Hall & Hord, 1987). Van Meter headed a team that piloted the ICCM for SBDM interviewing SBDM members and reviewing council minutes in 31 schools across the state. The team found that planning processes of any kind were more likely to produce higher SBDM involvement and more complete adoption of other SBDM practices (Van Meter, 1995).

Despite considerable activity and regardless of the quality of such activity, SBDM actions may be limited by the conflict generated in addressing issues at the school level. One source of conflict affects both schools and districts because SBDM diminished district level power effectively pitting school boards and superintendents against principals and teacher or parent council members. While some of these struggles were settled in the courts, others were documented in the early stages of implementation.

Superintendents, like most other Kentucky educators, initially focused their concerns on merely understanding the major changes in their jobs as required by KERA (Murphy, 1993, 1994a, b). Boards also found their new responsibilities related to SBDM difficult (Babbage, 1993). However, one persisting complaint from both superintendents and boards centers on SBDM's role in the hiring process for school positions (Dattilo, 2000). Superintendents are particularly concerned about what they perceived as a lack of control over principal selection (KIER & KASS, 1994; KIER, 1996). From the council members' perspectives, superintendents and boards are seen among the biggest obstacles in addressing SBDM policy implementation (Lindle, Gale & Curry-White, 1994, 1995; Russo, 1995a, b). On the other hand, district offices complain that they don't know what role to take in addressing SBDM needs at the school level since they fear overstepping their bounds (Cleaver, 1997; Lindle, 1998b, 1999a).

In a 1997 dissertation from the University of Louisville, with a 70% survey return rate, elementary principals from across the state revealed ambivalence regarding the degree of trust between central offices and schools over SBDM activities. This finding was mitigated by principals' report that superintendents and boards tout their support of SBDM (Tyra, 1997). This inconsistent finding is supported by the repeated Wilkerson &

Associates opinion surveys that show superintendents as vocal supporters of KERA, yet critics of SBDM (KIER & KASS, 1994; Wilkerson & Associates, 1994, 1996).

The other source of conflict centers on the processes for making SBDM policy. Principals hold sole responsibility for chairing SBDM meetings (KRS § 160.345 (2) (b)). By virtue of controlling SBDM agenda and supervising the teacher members of SBDM councils, principals wield enormous coercive power (Brown & Lindle, 1995; Johnson & Scollay, 1996; Lindle, Gale & Curry-White, 1994, 1995; Russo, Van Meter & Johnson, 1996).

Even without a personal power focus, SBDM issues can generate battles within the school. A few studies suggest that SBDM training does not equip council members for handling even mild disputes much less substantial differences in perspectives (Brown & Lindle, 1995; Donelan, 1992; Lindle, 1994; Martin, 1995; Schofield, 1996; Sigafus, 1994; Van Meter, 1995).

In summary, few studies investigate effects of SBDM on schools and school districts. Several studies describe the kinds of activities associated with SBDM. These studies reveal that SBDM often does not address salient issues of instruction and curriculum. Other studies suggest that conflict between schools and school district administration or within schools may divert the work of SBDM from addressing policy on instruction and curriculum

### SBDM & Communities

The SBDM law was designed to focus more on a school's immediate community of teachers, students, and parents, than on the larger community. In fact, the systemic nature of KERA reveals a stronger connection between Family Resource/Youth Services Centers and the larger community even though SBDM councils are to be connected to FRYSC activities in their own buildings (95-SBDM-150). As a result, there is no SBDM research addressing the larger community. However, parent involvement with SBDM lingers as a critical concern about SBDM effectiveness.

Researchers continue to investigate two aspects of parent involvement with SBDM. One aspect focuses on the degree to which parents are active in SBDM. The other aspect focuses on parents' satisfaction with their involvement in SBDM.

Most report parental participation in SBDM elections and related activities as minimal (Coe, Kannapel, Aagaard & Moore, 1995a, b; David, 1994, 1995; KIER & KASS, 1994; KIER, 1996; Lindle, Gale & Curry-White, 1994, 1995; Schaver, 1994). Notwithstanding low numbers in comparison to the overall parent population, some observers ask why higher percentages of parents should vote in school council elections than in general civic elections? Others observe that low observer attendance at SBDM meetings may be an indication of general satisfaction rather than apathy (Lindle, 1992; 1994; Sigafus, 1994). These kinds of rationalizations may indicate why early research showed that most SBDM councils do not exercise known strategies for increasing parent involvement (Lindle, 1992; 1996).

The Consolidated Planning process offers a potential path to increased parent involvement (Collins, 1998). A study produced at the University of Kentucky Appalachian Center used data sources from Kentucky and Texas to investigate the potential for parent involvement in planning activities. Noting the oft-cited structural and personal barriers between parents and schools, the study concluded that training parents in the activities associated with Kentucky's school-based Consolidated Planning could increase the likelihood of parental involvement in schools (Collins, 1998).

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence initiated a strategy for building general parent capacity in 1997. Preliminary results indicate that increasing parents' personal growth and educating them on Kentucky's complex reform can strengthen parents' participation in schools. Some of these parents have reported more active roles in SBDM councils, committees, and initiatives (Lindle, 1998b; Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, 1999b).

Parent involvement remains the overriding concern for SBDM's effects on school communities. This aspect of SBDM is under-researched.

### SBDM & Educators

The professionals most directly affected by SBDM are principals and teachers. Superintendents continue to bemoan their peripheral role in SBDM processes, although some superintendents have discovered effective ways to support schools in the policy and planning processes. The research describing these effects is thin.

The principal was identified early in the implementation of SBDM as a critical and powerful factor in SBDM processes (Brown & Lindle, 1995; Coe, Kannapel, Aagaard, & Moore, 1995a,b; David, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Prichard Committee, 1995). As noted in a Miami University dissertation, Kentucky's principals were expected to move from an authoritative role to a more democratic "deconstruction" of power (Goode, 1994). The extent to which principals have assumed such a democratic role is debatable.

In general, principals report more satisfaction with SBDM than other groups, which could suggest a naiveté about their own dominance in school councils (Lindle, 1992; Logan & Byers, 1995). Yet, Tyra's (1997) study showed that elementary principals were generally convinced that other SBDM members turned to them for difficult decisions. Even so, these elementary principals were concerned about low participation from school constituents (Tyra, 1997). Given parents' and teachers' reports fearing reprisals from principals or each other, perceptions about coercive power seem to indicate a lack of the trust necessary for democratic functions (Johnson & Scollay, 1996; Lindle, Gale & Curry-White, 1994, 1995; Tyra, 1997).

Three University of Kentucky dissertations explored the leadership styles of SBDM principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Gerl, 1994; Hutton, 1995, Schadler, 1994). These early studies showed that elementary schools focused more on assessment results over principal leadership as sources of satisfaction (Hutton, 1995). Middle schools divided on gender lines when it came to satisfaction with SBDM activities with men more satisfied than women (Schadler, 1994). High schools turned to principals for leadership in SBDM activities (Gerl, 1994).

The findings suggest that principals' role as the professional expert on council serves as a crucible of council success. In other words, by necessity, teachers and parents rely on principals for their legal and administrative expertise, but this expertise is also a threat to the trust and equitable status necessary for all council members to be partners in the decision making process (Goode, 1994). This delicate balance suggests the necessity of some sort of check on principal behavior.

A dissertation completed at the University of Southern California investigated the types of principal evaluation found under five different models of school-level decision making (James, 1997). Three were district models from two districts in California and

the one in Chicago. Kentucky and the United Kingdom provide the other two models. This study suggested that Kentucky's model was more tightly linked than the others, but the dissertation described Kentucky's principals as reporting that Kentucky's testing and accountability system provided evaluative feedback on principal performance (James, 1997). As this is simply not the fact of Kentucky's legislated system, James's finding demonstrates the dangers of self-report data. Kentucky principals probably perceive their job performance as hinging on student achievement, but by design and through practice, no Kentucky principal to-date has ever lost his/her job as a result of school accountability (Lindle, 1999b).

Kentucky's teachers also repeatedly report their professionalism is called into question through Kentucky's high stakes accountability system (Foster, 1999; Lindle, 1998c; Winograd, Petrosko, Compton-Hall, & Cantrell, 1997). Yet, teachers have a more benign view of SBDM than of accountability (Szabo, 1994; Van Meter & Björk, 1996). Two University of Kentucky dissertations noted that teacher comfort with SBDM was related to the extent of teachers' experience with SBDM (Rogers, 1992; Wall, 1996). Rogers focused on elementary teachers and found they attributed their involvement in SBDM to their training for it (Rogers, 1992). While Wall found secondary teachers attributed little sense of efficacy to their roles in SBDM (Wall & Rinehart 1998). Wall postulated that the systemic nature of Kentucky's reforms may override teachers' identification with school-level initiatives echoing other findings as well as the above-noted complexity of Kentucky's design (Brown, 1997; Rinehart, Short & Johnson, 1994).

Teachers' major complaint about SBDM is the time constraints. Time to implement all of KERA's initiatives was limited (Winograd, Petrosko, Compton-Hall, & Cantrell, 1997). Yet a dissertation from Ohio University and another from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, both indicated insufficient time as a factor inhibiting teachers' involvement in SBDM (Oliver, 1992; Zwick, 1996).

While teachers and principals are the most directly involved educators in SBDM, superintendents arguably are ancillary to SBDM processes. As previously noted, superintendents report concerns about their changed roles in personnel at the school level. Yet, OEA reports that most superintendents exceed expectations in providing guidance to the principal selection process (Henry, Stearns, & Oaken, undated). Reiterating opinion

polls that show superintendents as supportive of KERA in general, Hammond's 1993 dissertation from the University of Alabama showed Kentucky superintendents to be significantly more supportive of SBDM than Alabama superintendents.

Notwithstanding these contradictory findings, there is little other insight into the effects of SBDM on superintendents. While the superintendents have raised concerns about implementation, no studies have addressed the effects of SBDM on Kentucky's superintendents.

In summary, principals' and teachers' perceptions of SBDM show ways in which SBDM both empowers and hinders democratic processes at the school level. Other than identifying superintendents' concerns over implementation, no study address SBDM's effects on these educators.

### SBDM & Governmental Agencies

SBDM was specifically designed to remove some power from both the state and district levels to the school in exchange for greater school accountability for student performance. Thus, by design, SBDM should have effects on both the Kentucky Department of Education and local school boards.

Only two studies exist concerning SBDM and the Kentucky Department of Education. One study focused generally on the KERA provisions for re-organizing the department, and drew no specific conclusions regarding the department's role in SBDM (Lusi, 1994). Lusi noted a general tendency on the part of the department to react in a more centralized fashion than prior to the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (Lusi, 1994; Van Meter, 1997). The other study, a dissertation from the University of Louisville, specifically addressed KDE's readiness to support the implementation of SBDM (Adams-Rodgers, 1995). Reinforcing Lusi's findings concerning the hierarchical rather than service-oriented nature of the state agency, Adams-Rodgers concluded that statutory authority for implementing KERA obviated KDE's supporting role. In the case of SBDM, KDE was hampered by time in providing optimum support (Adams-Rodgers, 1995).

Replicating Lusi's work at the district level, Cleaver's University of Kentucky dissertation showed that at least two of Kentucky's school district offices had difficulty in

establishing their roles in SBDM (Cleaver, 1997). Follow-up on one of these districts showed that it took about five years, turnover in the superintendency, a focus on standards-based education, and a state-mandated Consolidated Planning approach to restructure the district office and find it a role in supporting school-level policy making (Lindle, 1998a, 1999a).

The studies on the effects of SBDM on government agencies are sparse. This is particularly surprising given SBDM's express design in redistributing authority and accountability.

### SBDM & the Public

Other than perceptual data from Wilkerson & Associates surveys, the public's reaction to or involvement in SBDM has not been studied. In this case, public participation was not expected nor design into the model of authority and accountability established through SBDM by the 1989 Task Force (Foster, 1999; Task Force, 1989; Wilkerson & Associates, 1994, 1996).

### Summary of SBDM's effects on students, schools, school districts, communities, educators, governmental agencies, and the public

SBDM is only a part of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act's comprehensive educational design. Given the complexity of systemic design, inadequate attention has been given to the effects of SBDM on any aspect of the educational system including the people involved: students, teachers, principals, parents, etc. Descriptive studies suggest that participants like SBDM, but also find it time consuming and fraught with conflict. No study has described sufficiently the relationship between student performance or student life and SBDM activities. The necessary research resources have yet to be committed to answering the complex questions associated with SBDM effects on teaching and learning.

### What are the implications of what we know for educational policy?

In the comprehensive systemic design of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act, SBDM has the potential to wield enormous influence over teaching practices and

student life in schools. However, the research on SBDM to-date has relied primarily on one-shot, under-funded, limited investigations by doctoral candidates and regional researchers. As a result, most of the descriptions of SBDM are impressionistic and fragmented. Because these descriptions are based largely on perceptual data, few conclusions are justified. We can speculate that some feel empowered by SBDM. Others feel stressed over the time and conflict involved in local decision making. We cannot conclude that SBDM has provided the empowerment expected in the accountability-authority equation postulated by the 1989 Task Force.

### What are the unresolved issues and research questions?

Most of the questions raised in this review remain unanswered. A concentrated initiative for designing an adequate evaluation of Kentucky's systemic reform remains an unattainable goal without resources necessary for research. The questions all remain:

- What are the effects of SBDM on the teaching-learning process?
- What are the effects and interactions of SBDM with other KERA initiatives?
- What have been the effects of SBDM on students, schools, school districts, communities, educators, governmental agencies, and the public?

### What research is in progress?

As noted previously, the primary sources for supporting SBDM investigations have disappeared. The Appalachian Education Lab has been reconfigured and is no longer investigating KERA implementation. The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence has turned to issues of teacher preparation and parent involvement, and it no longer supports research into SBDM. The Kentucky Department of Education no longer has a division of SBDM and also no longer funds research on SBDM. OEA will continue to provide implementation updates in its annual reports, but does not conduct research *per se*. Dissertations are still in progress, but generally represent limited investigations of SBDM. The outlook for further research on Kentucky's SBDM is grim. With so many unanswered questions, this prognosis is most unwelcome.

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