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THE DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM
EFFECTIVENESS: AN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
PERSPECTIVE

presented by

Dean J. Pratt

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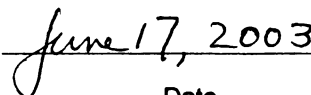of the requirements for the

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THE DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS:
AN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

By

Dean J. Pratt

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

THE DYNAMICS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS:
AN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

By

Dean J. Pratt

My primary purpose in this study was to describe the functioning of school

improvement teams (SITs) and to determine the extent to which these teams evidenced

effective organizational principles for groups as they planned and implemented strategies

for school improvement. A secondary purpose was to discover the extent to which the

teams in the schools included in this study differed with regard to team effectiveness. For

the past 12 years, the state of Michigan has required formalized school improvement

through mandated school improvement teams. In this study I set out to describe the

behaviors of six SITs as well as the external conditions that influenced the school districts

where these teams operated. Although the six teams were configured similarly, it was

important to understand what they were called upon to do and how the literature and

current thinking concerning team effectiveness applied to those teams. I identified

factors that assisted and those that impeded the school improvement process in six

Michigan middle schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student

achievement.

The methodology employed was a multiple-case study with cross-case analysis. I

described important phenomena that take place in SITs by identifying patterns among

several variables pertaining to team functioning, team effectiveness, and school

achievement. I explored SIT members' knowledge of the dynamics of organizational

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behavior and development, and the teams' abilities to plan, develop, and implement strategies that align with mandated compliance criteria, while increasing student achievement. The data-collection strategies included surveys, personal visits and observations of the case schools, interviews of principals, document review, and review of published student achievement data from the Michigan Department of Education.

The exploratory question posed was: How does the functioning of SITs, assessed in terms of organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness criteria, differ in schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement? At the conclusion of the study, six major implications emerged: (a) the need for SITs to link student achievement results, purposeful reform strategies, and the act of school improvement planning; (b) the need to recognize and understand the relationship between accepted team development criteria and fundamental educational goals; (c) the need to delicately balance school improvement compliance requirements and organizational development and behavior principles to create conditions that support group effectiveness; (d) the need for principals to lead school improvement, interpreting all improvement through strategies designed to increase student achievement; (e) the need for training and staff development in organizational behavior, organizational development, and team effectiveness training; and (f) the need for school organizations to provide adequate time and resources for SITs to work.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDICES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Accountability! Shared vision! No child left behind! Principals and teachers in

public schools today are acutely aware of these public mantras as local, state, and federal

governments demand accountability for quality education and increased academic

achievement for all students in the nation's public schools. Public forums abound and

debate continues as to how this accountability can be guaranteed. By far the greatest

change in education during the past 10 years as a result of this debate has been state and

federal governments' increased role in legislating solutions.

As schools find themselves increasingly engaged in implementing systemic

reform initiatives mandated by law, one constant remains key to almost all of the

legislated mandates. This constant is that local education associations require specific

stakeholders at each school site to be part of a school improvement team (SIT).

Theoretically, the SIT has the power to channel creative problem-solving strategies into

reform initiatives that will aid individual schools in their quest for excellence for all

students. In essence, the SIT has the responsibility for making this happen, and the

team's success is measured by clear academic benchmarks set forth in governmental

mandates.

One concern among educators that is not necessarily shared by the public or

elected officials is that SITs are being asked to implement mandates and achieve reforms

in ways that are not necessarily enhanced by how most schools operate. The concern

centers on the argument that SITs are being required to design and implement measurable

1

reform mandates using decentralized approaches in school systems that are essentially structured as centralized bureaucracies. Are school districts and schools complex organizations whose cultures promote certain behaviors and inhibit others? If so, then reform initiatives and staff development that focuses exclusively on certain behaviors "without recognizing the influence of the organization in supporting or suppressing new practices will fail" (Sparks, 1996, p. 262).

In Michigan, the focus area of this study, educational mandates are specifically outlined in a series of public acts, which require formal collaboration by a variety of stakeholders to ensure that continuous improvement occurs in all schools. SITs are required in all public schools and public school districts in Michigan and are held responsible for leading legislated school improvement according to a set of laws that require and guide specific procedural steps. All school improvement initiatives must be completed by working with several designated stakeholders who comprise the SIT.

As a practicing building administrator for 17 years, I have had numerous experiences working with site-based groups striving to devise and implement school improvement goals, objectives, and strategies. I have acted as a member, leader, facilitator, or paid consultant of these groups in a variety of school districts, most of them outside Michigan. The school improvement efforts initiated in those districts were primarily voluntary and usually inspired by a dynamic leader, an inspired faculty, or an angry constituency. It was only after moving to Michigan that I encountered state-legislated mandates for school improvement that included specific outcomes to be achieved and a specific set of criteria to follow to meet those mandates. These are explained below.

Public school reform has been mandated in Michigan since the initial passage of Public Act 25 by the state legislature in 1990. Public Acts 335, 336, and 339, which were passed in 1993, further defined, clarified, and enhanced Public Act 25. Academies and charter schools were established, and a major per-pupil foundation refinancing package for each school district was instituted in 1994. The acts provide for a process of change (the school improvement plan), the content of change (the core curriculum), a verification of change (accreditation), a communication of change (the annual report), and an academic measurement of change (the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, MEAP).

Thus, state-mandated reform is a reality for Michigan's public schools, and implementing strategies to meet local SIT reform initiatives is a major responsibility. As an administrator, I did not find it unusual to be held to certain accreditation standards, but I did find it engaging that the State of Michigan outlined clear benchmarks for students to achieve, accompanied by a testing mechanism to measure whether these benchmarks were being met. In addition, each school had to follow specific state-mandated procedures to ensure that these benchmarks were met. Michigan state government told its educational community what was expected of students completing a K-12 education and also mandated the process to follow in achieving that goal. The managerial and leadership responsibilities mandated for Michigan schools by these public acts are shown in Figure 1.1.

In Michigan, mandated school reform with detailed accountability has been in effect for the past 12 years. SITS have been an integral part of this process since Public Act 25 became law. School districts and individual schools increasingly are finding new and better ways to plan for and implement change through their SITs. And the vision and

PA 335 OF 1993

- Access community resources
- Access adult and community resources
- Practice building level decision making

PA25 OF 1990

School Improvement Plan

- Develop a mission statement
- Develop goals based on student outcomes
- Implement curriculum aligned with the goals
- Evaluate methods developed for each goal
- Design staff development aligned with the goals and strategies of the school
- Develop building level decision making strategies
- Include all school community stakeholders

PA 336 OF 1993

- Professional development plans
- Mentoring for new teachers

PA 339 OF 1993
Adult Roles

- Skills students need
- Skills teachers need
- Criteria for professional development
- Alternative assessment
- Technology
- On the job learning

Figure 1.1: Responsibilities for SITs as mandated by Public Acts 25, 335, 336, and 339.

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goals professed at professional education meetings and in the educational literature reflect the belief that all children can learn and that site-based teams are an integral part of the process.

It is well documented that schools throughout Michigan have varying degrees of student achievement. The state has mandated certain academic benchmarks, and achievement of these benchmarks is measured solely by the state MEAP test. Moreover, all schools are required to have a SIT. Are the characteristics of SITs the same in all schools, or do they differ? Are they run the same way? Are internal expectations as to their importance and significance similar? Are some SITs more effective than others, and does that effectiveness look different from school to school? How and to what extent are SITs empowered? These questions have intrigued me for several years.

Every school in Michigan is required to implement the state-mandated reforms; this is a comprehensive effort to bring about authentic change, particularly as it relates to increased student achievement. The internal group required to plan and implement that change, the SIT, must be effective if its efforts are to produce the desired results. Researchers have asserted that the best approach for implementing effective reform is to blend many strategies so that they create a lasting effect on the culture of the organization (McKenzie, 2001). Do SITs and the individuals charged with their work take into account organizational issues that enhance team effectiveness?

As SITs meet and recommend goals, objectives, and strategies for their schools to implement, they accept enormous responsibility for the academic achievement of the students they serve. A number of organizational issues are likely to surface, and implementation of any reform initiatives will hinge on how effective the SIT is in relating to and dealing with these issues. Of great interest is whether or not SITs evidence

effective organizational traits and principles as defined in the literature for effective teams and work groups. Or do these groups call to mind the ironic question posed by Larry Cuban (2001), a Stanford University professor: How can so much school reform have taken place over the last century, yet schooling appear pretty much the same as it always has been?

Problem Statement

I am interested in the many elements inherent in the processes followed by SITs and the schoolwide ramifications of these processes as SITs implement government-mandated reforms. These processes range from the simple (such as when and how a team meets) to the complex (such as how the team interacts, as measured by principles of effective group behavior in organizations). For the past nine years, I have been concerned with and responsible for the published achievements of as few as one of these teams a year to as many as nine. I am interested in gaining information as to how these teams can work together collectively and effectively.

I have been the director of administration and instruction in a class-A public school district (8,100 students in grades K-12) in Michigan for two years. I am responsible for nine buildings, evaluating principals and the school improvement efforts in which they and their teams engage. Before taking this position, I was a principal of four middle schools and one elementary school, giving me a total of 17 years of administrative experience. In those 17 years, I was directly responsible for two SITs in Michigan and currently am indirectly responsible for the achievements of nine SITs. I have lived through the state-mandated requirements and changes and witnessed the interactions of many groups as they worked to implement the required changes in individual schools. Those experiences piqued my curiosity about the SIT process.

6

Specifically, I am interested in discovering why some groups seem to be more effective than others. The reasons for my interest in this subject are many and varied.

First, as the main evaluator of nine building principals, I need to understand how the role of the principal is expanding, requiring new knowledge and skill in working with groups and teams. Central offices and districts are downsizing in an attempt to decentralize their operations, passing most of the instructional duties and all of the school improvement responsibilities to principals. Ironically, this has caused problems because "those forces farthest from the classroom are pushing for higher academic standards, [but] support [at the board level] for subject-area staff development and assistance to teachers is dwindling" (Pipho, 1986, p. 1).

It has become apparent that, to comply with many new state and federal mandates, principals and organized stakeholders are expected to have the skills and knowledge to facilitate collaborative systemic reform. In most instances, though, neither the principal nor the SIT possesses these skills. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) stressed the importance of the principal as a leader and instructor for site-based teams that have the same responsibilities as Michigan's SITs. One of the barriers they cited that interferes with the school community's realizing a shared vision is the principal's inability to adequately educate and prepare teams to do their job. Principals are realizing that their management roles are decreasing and their leadership roles increasing.

Although principals are being given extensive responsibilities, my experience has shown that many of them lack group-processing skills and knowledge of school organizational issues, and generally they are unclear about their role in school governance. Theoretically, in centralized, high-involvement management, which principals are now expected to facilitate, teams of individuals actually provide services,

identify goals, set objectives, and design strategies, all with decision-making authority, and they are held accountable for the results. This is the emerging management and organization model for both the public and private sectors of today's economy.

Principals must now design or facilitate a management and organization strategy around the nature of the required work, which has three key dimensions: complexity, collegiality, and certainty. Simple, individual, and highly certain work lends itself to hierarchical structures, whereas the work in schools requires much flexibility (Barzelay, 1992; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1986, 1992; Wohlstetter, Smyer, & Mohrman, 1994). As a former middle school principal, I concur with Cotton's (1992) assertion that "Schools are sometimes asked to implement programs of school-based management while continuing to function within the constraints imposed by existing federal, state, school board, district and teacher union regulations. In these situations, school personnel sometimes find that there is very little left to manage" (p. 8).

Finally, I am primarily interested in the many elements inherent in the processes involved in SITs because it is the principal's responsibility to give all SIT members direction and training to lead small and large groups in goal-setting ventures. In essence, I want to understand the forces and conditions influencing a SIT's effectiveness as the team manages and implements the reform plans it creates, and reframes legislative mandates to fit its particular school. SIT effectiveness is two-fold: effectiveness as it relates to completing mandated state compliance processes (means) and effectiveness as it relates to increased student achievement (ends), the desired product.

My 17 years of administrative experience have convinced me that SITs and principals must possess the tools necessary to implement reform strategies that will improve student outcomes or else be at odds with the intention of the public acts that

have been initiated. My perspective is that the skills and knowledge described in the literature on team effectiveness mirror and enhance the school reform/change literature. These two fields also are complemented by the literature on organizational behavior and organizational development as they pertain to groups and group effectiveness within larger organizational constraints. These sources will help in understanding what seems at times to be the mystery of achieving success in designing school improvement plans and strategies for increasing student achievement.

Purpose and Objectives

My primary purpose in this study is to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidence effective organizational principles for groups as they plan and implement strategies for school improvement. A secondary purpose is to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this study differ with regard to team effectiveness.

Specifically, in this study I describe important phenomena that take place in SITs by identifying patterns among several variables pertaining to team functioning, team effectiveness, and school achievement. Theories that are used in this study come from the broad fields of school reform and change, organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness. They include sociotechnical systems theory (Jaques, 1951), contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), the six-box model (Weisbord, 1976), the congruence model (Nadler & Tushman, 1977), and a change-based organizational framework (Porras & Robertson, 1992).

Because this study is focused specifically on describing the functioning and effectiveness of SITs, explicit effectiveness criteria for SITs needed to be delineated. Therefore, a three-dimensional conception of group effectiveness, incorporating the main

9

emphases of the above-mentioned theories, is used to help describe and explain the important human behaviors being assessed. This three-dimensional conception of group effectiveness is "an alternative kind of theorizing—one that is more congruent with the facts of life in social systems" (Hackman, 1990, p. 9). The three dimensions are (a) a group's productive output, (b) the degree to which the work enhances members' ability to work interdependently in the future, and (c) the degree to which "the group experience contributes to the growth and personal well-being of team members" (Hackman, 1990, p. 7).

The conceptual framework developed for this study was based on organizational theory, which in turn led to a theoretical perspective that served as a lens through which I could assess team effectiveness and school achievement by identifying and matching patterns among several variables. I did not use experimental manipulation or pure random assignment of subjects to conditions because the events being studied had already occurred and hence were not manipulable (Kerlinger, 1979). My intention was not to identify causal relationships in this study. Hence, it was critical to use the theoretical model that I adopted as a foundation to aid in meaningfully interpreting the findings rather than guessing or relying on an ingrained bias. As Rossi and Freeman (1985) noted,

> In any political system sensitive to weighing, assessing, and balancing the conflicting claims and interests of a number of constituencies, one can expect an evaluation to play the role of expert witness, testifying to the degree of a program's effectiveness. A jury of decision makers and other stakeholders may give such testimony more weight than uninformed opinion or shrewd guessing, but it is they, not the witness, who reach a verdict. (p. 239)

A final objective in this study is to investigate whether SITs possess the knowledge necessary to understand the dynamics of organizational behavior and development, as well as the skills to plan, develop, and implement strategies to achieve their mandated reform goals, essentially increased student achievement. Further, I intend

10

to determine whether the SITs in the selected schools are effective as planners of change and reform and whether they are able to implement strategies that address the mandated reforms in their individual schools.

Research Questions

My primary purpose in this study is to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidence effective organizational principles for groups as they plan and implement strategies for school improvement. The overarching research question that was posed to guide the collection of data with which to fulfill this purpose is as follows: How does the functioning of SITs, assessed in terms of organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness criteria, differ in schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement? Several subsidiary questions also were posed:

1. What are SITs called upon to do?

2. How do the literature and current thinking concerning team effectiveness apply to SITs?

3. Why do SITs that appear to be configured similarly vary in their effectiveness?

4. To what extent do SIT members pay attention to criteria for effective team functioning?

5. To what extent are leaders of SITs interested in managing the group's actions, as opposed to creating conditions that support team effectiveness?

Need for and Importance of the Study

This multiple-case study with cross-case analysis has the potential to make meaningful contributions to K-12 public school education in the areas of practice and

research, particularly the preparation of future school administrators and teachers. The study has the potential to provide guidance to future researchers investigating SITs' effectiveness, educators' roles as planners of school improvement related to student achievement, and new roles for administrators as facilitators of organizational change groups. Current members of SITs will be especially interested in the examination of specific administrative strategies that enhance or detract from successful school improvement initiatives in site-based, decentralized school organizations.

Current research is inconclusive about whether there is a relationship between local school improvement initiatives and increased student achievement. Many researchers have claimed there is no evidence of such a relationship (Arterbury & Hord, 1991; Conley & Bacharach, 1990; David & Peterson, 1983; Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989). The positive relationships between increased student achievement and site-based decision groups that have been identified in the literature seem to depend on several factors, including the effectiveness of the leadership of local SITs; the human resource management, organizational development, and organizational behavior strategies implemented; and the importance of student achievement as a recognizable goal of the process (Cohen, 1989; Cotton, 1992; English, 1989; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Mitchell, 1990). Public school practitioners can use the information gathered in this research to plan for and implement reform measures based on specific student outcomes.

Findings from this research might influence the training plans of local school districts or intermediate school districts with regard to school improvement. Emphasis may change from implementation of a specific program to group and team effectiveness training focused on increasing student achievement. A new body of knowledge will also be added to the fields of educational administration and labor and industrial relations.

Interesting information will be provided on the relationship between SIT effectiveness and organizational development and behavior in public schools, especially because particular team strategies have different effects in business than those observed in school organizations.

Finally, state education departments and policy makers will be able to use the findings from this study to help them plan more efficiently before enacting reform mandates or administrative rules and regulations concerning compulsory education. In a 1993 report concerning Michigan's progress toward achieving the National Educational Goals, Governor John Engler stated, "Most people believe that goals can be established nationally and by the state while the local boards are still provided with the latitude to operate schools" (p. 1). This study will provide significant information for state policy makers as to how research validates this belief, as well as how practitioners in the field design strategies to achieve the goal of increased student achievement.

Settings for the Study

The settings for this study were six middle schools in Michigan to which I assigned the pseudonyms Spruce, Oak, Elm, Poplar, Maple, and Willow Middle School to maintain their anonymity. All six schools have a grades 6-8 configuration, are located in suburban/rural areas, and range in size from 600 to 900 pupils. The student populations of these schools are predominantly white. The schools receive similar state aid per student, have similar poverty rates, and have similar pupil-teacher ratios. All are accredited by the North Central Association (NCA). The average teacher salary ranges from $47,000 to $51,000.

<u>Assumptions</u>

This research was predicated on the following assumptions relative to the achievement of individuals using the SIT process mandated by Michigan law.

1. Human resource management is a critical piece of all reform efforts instituted in an organization, and whether they realize it or not, principals use human resource management tactics in dealing with SITs' decisions, plans, and strategies (Cuban, 1990; Milkovich & Boudreau, 1997; J. E. Mitchell, 1990; Senge, 1990).

2. All Michigan schools follow guidelines mandated by the state and federal governments, specifically, Goals 2000: The Educate America Act (March 31, 1994) and Public Law 103-227 (108 Stat. 125).

3. A Michigan school has all of the necessary attributes to define it as an organization (Morgan, 1986; Northcraft & Neal, 1994).

4. Successful organizations are those that have clearly defined goals and objectives and have identified strategies to meet those objectives (Smithers, Houston, & McIntire, 1996).

5. Individuals who can facilitate varying interest groups in achieving one goal lead successful organizations (Lewicki, Litterer, Saunders, & Minton, 1993).

6. Whether mandated change can be achieved depends on the degree of authority delegated to a school site and the ability of the site to exercise that authority (Mutchler, 1989).

7. Employees of a school and significant adult members of the school community contribute to the organization's ability to achieve its objectives (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

8. SITs are a promising strategy for improving the quality of educational decision making because the people making the decisions are those closest to the students (Cohen, 1989; Cotton, 1992).

9. All schools technically meet the legislative requirements for school reform, but some demonstrate more effectiveness than others when working as a team to increase student achievement (Hackman, 1990).

10. No individual can function effectively alone. Because groups are a defining feature of organizations, capable work groups are essential for organizational effectiveness (Smithers et al., 1996).

11. Having an effective team will result in an organizational diagnosis of effectiveness, evidenced in enhanced productivity, worker satisfaction, and growth (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Nadler & Tushman, 1977; Porras & Robertson, 1992; Smithers et al., 1996; Weisbord, 1976).

Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways. The appropriateness of the mandated school improvement process as a required exercise for Michigan's public schools was not considered. Further, SITs in private or charter schools were not included in the study, nor were district-level SITs or superintendents. Finally, no attempt was made to identify causal relationships.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework developed for this research encompassed three broad areas of the literature—school reform/change, organizational development, and

organizational behavior—and their relationship to team effectiveness theories. It was necessary to review multiple perspectives from the literature on these three broad topics and to shape these perspectives into a theoretical lens through which to focus on team and group effectiveness in schools. The framework and conceptual lens were used to link the research questions to a larger theory (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). My main goal was to focus the investigation using the broad theories advanced by several scholars, not as global conceptual schemes of grand theorists, but as a tool to investigate more prosaic theories concerning how human organizations work and how solutions to social problems are generated. Theorizing, aided by the conceptual model, allowed me to construct a plausible and defensible model of how programs can be expected to work, before evaluating them (Chen & Rossi, 1983). In investigating specific areas of school reform, organizational behavior and organizational development strategies, the nexus or crux of where these bodies of research intersected, were recognizable and used to describe the degrees of effectiveness observed in teams.

The conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1.2 was developed as a preliminary theoretical lens to guide this research through two distinct phases of inquiry: the literature review and the field study work. This lens was used in sorting out and explaining the relationships between school reform and organizational behavior/ organizational development as they pertains to team functioning in school organizations. Miles and Huberman (1984) described this type of conceptual framework as a "current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated" (p. 33). Realizing that this current map would change as the study evolved, it was my aim to apply both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a multiple-case study design using cross-case analysis. It was imperative that a specific theory be used to "move from speculation

SCHOOL REFORM

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR/ DEVELOPMENT
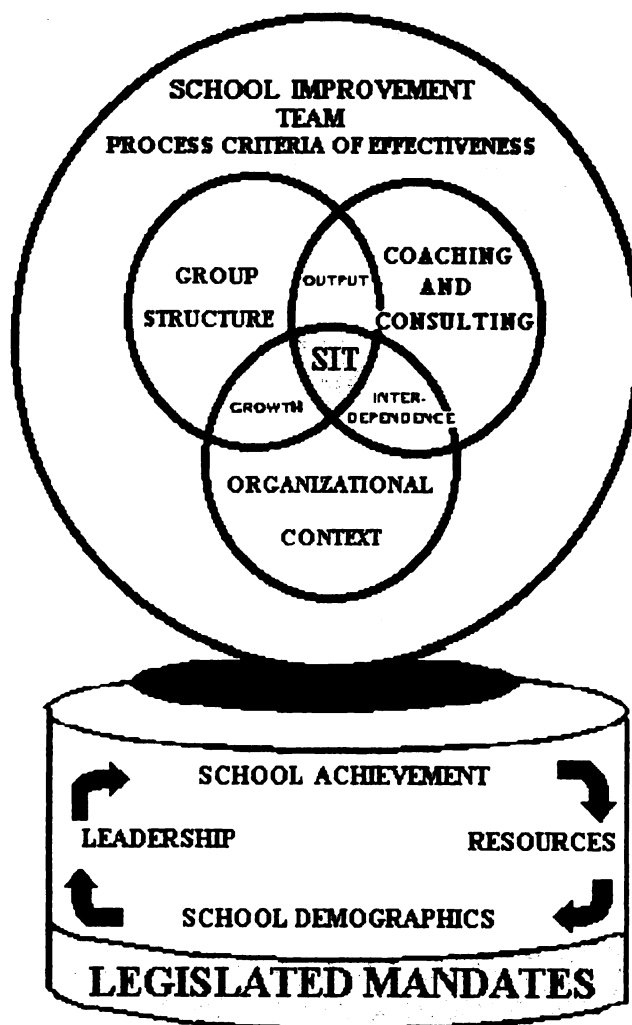
Figure 1.2: Conceptual framework: Theoretical lens highlighting factors influencing the functioning of SITs.

to data, . . . improve the descriptive accuracy of a theory, . . . set priorities in research that are more likely to hold up in practice, and help a field progress from professional lore to scientific theory" (Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1995, p. 480). Therefore, a more specific theoretical perspective emerged as the research evolved.

Theoretical Perspective

In formulating a theoretical perspective for studying how the functioning of SITs differs, the literature on school reform, organizational development, and organizational behavior led me to five specific theories of organizational diagnosis: sociotechnical systems theory (Jaques, 1951), contingency theory (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), the six-box model (Weisbord, 1976), the congruence model (Nadaler & Tushman, 1977), and a change-based organizational framework (Porras & Robertson, 1992). Each provides a blueprint for how an organization works, an explanation of how organizational problems might have occurred, and a map for accurate data collection. The theories also provide descriptions of ideal states of organizational functioning to which data can be compared. Finally, they represent the components and processes of a healthy organization, allowing for accurate organizational diagnosis (Smithers et al., 1996). Although all five theories offer several insights into organizational details and how effective organizations operate, it was necessary to find a more specific model that followed similar processes but dealt with effective work groups and teams in successful organizations.

My research led me to conclude that SITs are in the business of organizational diagnosis and need to be cognizant of the organizational architecture that is present in their schools. Organizational diagnosis is a process used by change agents to gain an understanding of an organization's functioning and to develop strategies to enhance its productivity, worker satisfaction, and growth (Smithers et al., 1996). Organizational

18

architecture comprises the elements of the social and work systems that make up a complex organization (Nadler, 1992) such as a school. It made sense to use the key similarities of the five theories mentioned above while seeking a more specific theory based on their tenets but focused primarily on team effectiveness. The assumption was that an effective team will produce an effective organizational diagnosis, resulting in enhanced productivity, worker satisfaction, and growth. Having a clear definition of an effective team allowed me to take a clear look at how different teams function and provided a basis for measuring those teams against a set of defined parameters.

Johnson and Johnson (1994) developed a model of team effectiveness that provided for what they said were ideal standards for group functioning and effectiveness. The nine components, listed and explained below, can serve as descriptive criteria for team effectiveness and reflect the primary tenets of the five theories listed above. These components or standards were used in developing a survey for use in this study.

The first of the nine components, *understanding, relevance, and commitment to goals,* represents the idea that group members clearly understand and share the goals of the group and that those goals are personally relevant. Because the goals are relevant, as group members work interdependently to achieve them, cooperation promotes achievement and productivity (Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, & Skon, 1981).

The second component, *communication of ideas and feelings,* works in a two-way direction in effective groups and only one way in ineffective groups. Schein (1969, 1988) asserted that teams must perceive, understand, and act upon or process the events that occur in their environment. To understand their own interactions, group members must be able to communicate the distinctions between the content and the process of their activities.

The third component, *active participation and distribution of leadership,* describes effective groups' sharing of leadership opportunities among group members as the team attempts to attend to different tasks and issues. *Flexible use of decision-making procedures,* the fourth component, describes the necessity for groups to achieve consensus in making decisions, thereby fostering equalization of power and adding to the group's effectiveness. Ineffective groups tend to ignore and side-step conflict, whereas effective groups use conflict constructively to reach their goals.

The fifth component, *encouragement and constructive management of conflict,* describes how effective groups manage conflict to foster creative problem solving and greater participation by group members. In addition, for teams to be effective, *members need to recognize that power cannot be concentrated with only a few,* the sixth component. Instead, effective teams influence and are influenced by those who have power based on expertise, ability, and information, depending on the task to be performed or the decision to be made.

Effective groups also display *high group cohesion,* component seven. Members of effective teams like each other, and although this alone does not guarantee effectiveness, it does promote the processes necessary for a group to be effective. Group cohesiveness tends to increase when members cooperate, trust each other, and successfully achieve group goals. Organ and Batesman (1986) concurred with this assertion, citing shared values and norms, group size, and high entrance standards as three additional factors that promote group cohesiveness.

Using *efficient problem-solving strategies,* component eight, effective teams readily recognize novel features of the problems at hand and generate innovative solutions. The effectiveness of these solutions is then evaluated. Ineffective teams

recognize problems and institute standard solutions but rarely evaluate the effectiveness of those solutions.

Finally, the ninth component, *high interpersonal effectiveness,* is apparent in effective teams but not in ineffective ones. Interpersonal effectiveness is measured by comparing the consequences of an individual team member's actions with his or her intentions. Interpersonal effectiveness of a team increases as the matches between intentions and consequences increase.

Johnson and Johnson's model explains in detail the components of effectiveness that are necessary for a team but does little to explain outside influences that affect teams. Further review of the literature on team effectiveness revealed a three-dimensional conception of group effectiveness developed by Hackman (1990), which is a precise and useful prototype for evaluating the effectiveness of a group or team. Hackman developed and used this definition of effective teams in his organizational research, in which he studied diverse teams such as top management, task forces, professional support groups, performing groups, human service teams, customer service teams, and production teams. His definition broadly incorporates but does not specify all nine areas that Johnson and Johnson described, but it provides a more thorough understanding of group performance by combining what he termed the "enabling conditions" of successful group performance. By further refining the conceptual framework into a more precise theoretical perspective incorporating Hackman's enabling conditions with Johnson and Johnson's theoretical points (illustrated in Table 1.1), I could describe the functioning of SITs more accurately and in better detail.

Table 1.1: Points of leverage for creating conditions that enhance groups' task performance.

Points of Leverage			
Process Criteria of Effectiveness	Group Structure	Organizational Context	Coaching and Consultation
Ample effort	Motivational structure of group tasks	Organizational reward system	Remedying coordination problems and building group commitment
Sufficient knowledge and skill	Group composition	Organizational education system	Remedying inappropriate "weighting" of member inputs and fostering cross-training
Task-appropriate performance strategies	Group norms that regulate member behavior and foster scanning and planning	Organizational information system	Remedying implementation problems and fostering creativity in strategy development

Source: R. J. Hackman, "Work Teams in Organizations: An Orienting Framework." In R. J. Hackman (Ed.), *Groups That Work (and Those That Don't). Creating Conditions for Effective Teamwork* (p. 13). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990.

Hackman cited several observable traits that need to be in place for a group to perform effectively. The group must "exert sufficient effort to accomplish the task at an acceptable level of performance, bring adequate knowledge and skill to bear on the task work and employ task performance strategies that are appropriate to the work and to the setting in which it is being performed" (p. 9). He referred to these traits as the process criteria of effectiveness. Hackman's model also includes three aspects of the performance situation of groups: "the structure of the group itself, the organizational context in which the group operates, and the availability of team-oriented coaching and process assistance" (p. 10). Each aspect is further broken down into specific features, conditions, or interventions, as shown in Table 1.1.

Applying Hackman's theory to this study, I expected that I could determine whether the selected SITs were effective or not, depending on whether they exhibited the above-mentioned effectiveness criteria as they relate specifically to the dual effectiveness components required of SITs, process and product. Process effectiveness and product effectiveness are illustrated in Figure 1.3 and defined in the next section. My assumption in this multiple-case study with cross-case analysis is that SITs will behave in ways that are consistent with either effective or not effective teams and that patterns describing these traits can be identified and described.

PROCESS
(Mandated Compliance Requirements)
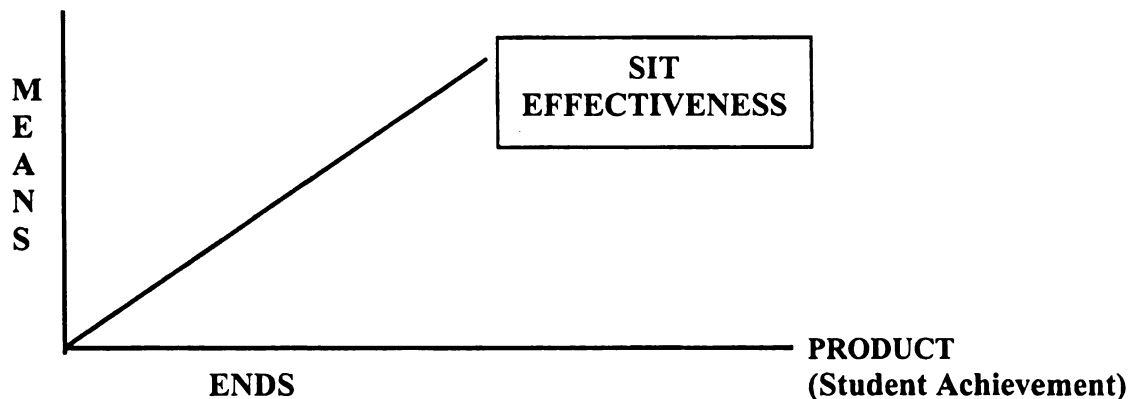
Figure 1.3: SIT effectiveness: process effectiveness and product effectiveness.

Rudestam and Newton (1992) asserted that research questions can be formulated from the framework or theoretical perspective as a way of explicating any theoretical assumptions and therefore orient the investigator to the primary goals and tasks of the study. The questions for this research, presented earlier, were developed and refined in this manner.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation.

Human resource. People within an organization who "design and produce the goods and services, control quality, market the products, allocate financial resources, and set overall strategies and objectives for the organization" (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1997, p. 2).

Human resource management. A series of integrated decisions that form the employment relationship; their quality directly contributes to the ability of the organization and employees to achieve their objectives (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1997, p. 2).

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP).

Michigan's MEAP tests are based on the Model Core Curriculum Outcomes and the Content Standards approved by the Michigan State Board of Education. No other published tests match Michigan's Outcomes and Standards. Also, Michigan's MEAP tests are criterion-referenced, meaning that the results are reported as performance against a standard. These standards are set by Michigan educators and approved by the Michigan State Board of Education. Student performance is judged according to whether or not each student met the achievement standard. If a student meets the standard, it means he/she meets expectations set by the State Board of Education on the recommended curriculum. In theory, all students in the state could achieve the standard in every subject. (http://www.michigan.gov/emi/0,1303,7-102-700-2254--F,00.html)

NCA accreditation. Recognition granted by the NCA Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, verifying that the school or district has met the NCA's specific membership and school improvement criteria (http://www.ncacasi.org/standard/glossary.adp).

24

North Central Association of Schools and Colleges (NCA). A regional

accrediting organization located in a 19-state region. The Michigan NCA state office is

located at The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (http://www.nca.umich.edu/).

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). "A nonprofit,

nonpartisan organization dedicated to providing research-based expertise, resources,

assistance, and professional development opportunities to educators and policy makers"

(http://www.ncrel.org/).

Organizational behavior. How people in organizations behave (Northcraft &

Neale, 1994).

Organizational development. The ways companies and organizations diagnose

and solve problems that limit those organizations' effectiveness (Smithers et al., 1996).

School improvement plan (SIP). A plan developed by a school "that emphasizes

student learning. The school community is committed to school improvement that must

be pursued continually and aggressively" (http://www.ncacasi.org/standard/emsu/sip.adp)

School improvement team (SIT). "A standing committee that is responsible for

initiating, planning, and coordinating the school's improvement efforts" (http://www.

ncacasi.org/standard/emsu/sip.adp)

Site-based management (SBM). Management that is defined by the following

five characteristics as they relate to a single school or school district: (a) is a form of

school district organization, (b) alters the governance of education in a district,

(c) represents a shift of authority toward decentralization, (d) identifies the school site as

the primary unit for educational change, and (e) moves increased decision-making power

to the local site (Cotton, 1992).

<u>Team effectiveness.</u> The degree to which a SIT can combine both mandated school improvement process compliance requirements (means) and expected school improvement product, increased student achievement (ends), to enhance overall school success.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

<u>Introduction</u>

My primary purpose in this study is to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidence effective organizational principles for groups as they plan and implement strategies for school improvement. A secondary purpose is to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this study differ with regard to team effectiveness. A conceptual framework based on organizational behavior and organizational development, team effectiveness theory, and school reform/change theory was developed to create a theoretical lens through which I could assess team effectiveness by identifying and matching patterns or relationships among several variables. To help in this endeavor, I reviewed research and professional literature in three distinct areas represented in the conceptual framework: (a) school reform/change, (b) organizational behavior and organizational development theories, and (c) group or team effectiveness. In the section on school reform/change, I look at past and present process initiatives, both mandated and locally initiated, that result in effective or ineffective change within a school organization. Next I look at organizational development and organizational behavior theories as they relate to the implementation of change within organizations. The discussion of group or team effectiveness is guided by research on effective teams within organizations.

The theories and research included in this chapter were reviewed to aid in understanding the dynamics that occur or do not occur in SITs as they attempt to meet the objectives of mandated school improvement. These objectives relate specifically to team

effectiveness and all planned initiatives to increase student achievement in Michigan's public middle schools through a local school improvement process.

School improvement in Michigan is based on the legislated intention that local school personnel and their constituents can make decisions and plans that will result in increased student achievement. Although published school improvement initiatives and implementation processes have been studied extensively, little research was discovered that pertained to SITs' effectiveness as they work to carry out state-mandated processes to increase student achievement. Team effectiveness has been well documented in other types of organizations but for the most part has not been studied in public school settings. Many similarities between the business world and education exist with regard to initiating new reforms, and a plethora of information is available on team effectiveness in organizations other than schools. Hence, organizational development theories and organizational behavior research, as well as school reform literature, were examined and integrated into this study. My intention was to link the findings from this study with those from associated research, to offer insights derived from relevant studies, and to develop an evaluation lens to describe and test the results from this study.

<u>School Reform/Change</u>

School reform planning and implementation became a significant responsibility of schools shortly after *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Several national panels and commissions were formed following this publication, and legislators, governors, and the federal government soon became interested and involved in designing reform strategies for America's public schools. Pipho (1986) explained that these legislators and governors initially became involved with top-down reform strategies, primarily with regard to student assessment

28

and reporting issues. The idea evolved into an impetus for reform that dealt primarily with decentralizing the educational bureaucracy in favor of what were initially called site-based management (SBM) teams but are currently referred to in the literature as SITs. Pipho contended that the result was that school boards continually were being called upon to expand programs locally, but with little assistance from state agencies. This dichotomy of change and improvement was guided by mandates that were passed down from "forces farthest from the classroom who [were] pushing for higher academic standards" (Pipho, 1986, p. 1).

Historical reform movements were many and varied. Educators had already experienced several programs and quick-fix fads that came and went, and the case for decentralization initially was received with caution by educational practitioners who had lived the reality of reforms that tended to come and go in cycles (Cuban, 1990). The literature that was reviewed on decentralization, reform, and SBM reflected several themes and definitions. Numerous problems were documented that stemmed from the inability to affix a clear definition to SBM.

In a broad review of the current literature, Cotton (1992) distilled SBM into five key characteristics, based on the assumption that centralized educational systems possess the same characteristics as bureaucracies and are therefore impersonal and slow to respond to change. The key characteristics identified regarding SBM are that it includes: (a) validation as a form of school district organization, (b) alteration of the governance of education in a district, (c) a shift of authority toward decentralization, (d) the school site as the primary unit for educational change, and (e) increased decision-making power at the local site (Cotton, 1992, p. 4).

According to Cotton, SBM research has suggested that the individual school is the primary unit for change and that those who work closest to children in the school know best what would benefit them. Also, lasting improvement takes time, and therefore local schools are in the best position to sustain improvement efforts. In addition, the school principal is key to school improvement at the site because significant change is brought about by staff and community participation in planning and implementation through local SITs. Finally, SBM structures keep the focus of schooling and reform initiatives on achievement and student outcomes; otherwise, SBM would fail as a reform initiative.

A major criticism of schools has been that they have been functioning in basically the same ways for the past century. A strong public school culture has developed that needs to be understood; otherwise, educational change cannot be effectively brought about. Thus, a thorough understanding of the backgrounds and working conditions of the main actors who are involved with schools is needed.

In this research, the main actors were identified as members of SITs. Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) maintained that making any change involves an act of faith. Innovation is multidimensional, and the cultures of schools, which may or may not be similar to those of other organizations, view the potential for change as threatening. The threat is represented by the difference between current practice and the future state to which change may take a school. Therefore, successful restructuring by any site-based team or school improvement plan (SIP) will come through changes due to altering the culture and structure of schools, and not through changes that simply improve current practice (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991).

The comprehensive reform recommended for schools, Michigan's public schools for example, differs from the simple action of improving current practice. Instead, such

30

reform is systemic and research based, has a record of effectiveness, and is intended to change an entire educational system one system at a time (Lockwood, 1999). Hence, in attempting to bring about comprehensive reform, SITs in Michigan must be careful, when viewing the changes that have been mandated, to recognize that change is a process. Without understanding the complex nature of the changes required, and without creating professional development opportunities for teachers and others, principals and SITs may end up adopting several innovations without seeing any permanent improvement in meeting their goals (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991).

Throughout the literature, a major theme was identified—that all school reform initiatives are focused on achieving one goal, increasing student achievement. The same theme was identified with regard to SBM. To accomplish this goal, emphasis is placed on the importance of balancing students' learning needs and teachers' workplace needs. It is imperative that any action that is taken reflect these two separate yet linked needs (Lieberman & Miller, 1990). Senge (1990) asserted that "organizations learn only through individuals that learn" (p. 139) and that organizational learning depends on the extent to which individuals demonstrate personal mastery, which involves continuously learning and clarifying what is important and what is current reality. Professional development that values and supports the continual growth and learning of a school staff is at the heart of any full-scale restructuring effort, promoting the vision of the school as a learning community (Owen, Loucks-Horsley, & Horsley, 1991).

The literature stressed that principals, as leaders, must articulate the mission and vision of the school as set forth by the SIT, with measurable objectives identified in the SIP. Principals need to encourage faculty to take part in professional development, create and foster an environment in which risk taking is allowed, and nurture enthusiastic life-

long learners by modeling the behaviors desired. These attributes to be emulated by principals are designed to meet one goal, increasing student achievement. As Webb and Berkbuegler (1998) explained, "In the end, however, the success of any professional development program will not be determined by how many teachers or administrators participated in the program . . . but by whether instruction is transformed in ways that have an impact on student learning" (p. 18).

Principals must see themselves as teachers of adults, both in professional settings and also when dealing with constituents as part of SBM teams. Principals need to view the development of others as one of their most important responsibilities. To address the various learning needs of all individuals, principals need to be not only leaders of learning organizations or communities but also key designers of plans and structures that support the higher levels of learning that are expected and mandated (Sparks, 1997; Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

Teachers also share a responsibility as members of SBM teams and SITs because they are the key implementers of all reform strategies. The literature suggested that SBM will not bring about improvements unless it includes teachers' participation in making decisions in areas that are important to them (Conley & Bacharach, 1990). A major responsibility of a SIT is to help teachers change how they view learning itself, develop new habits of instruction, and work collegially in public in order to facilitate the types of changes necessary to increase student achievement (Meijer, 1995).

Researchers have supported SBM and SITs as legitimate reform initiatives that increase student achievement; however, other writers have made the case that SBM and SITs have little or no effect on student achievement. Certain prerequisites must be in place for SITs to be effective. Cohen (1989) said that many school systems have adopted

SBM to increase school autonomy and to share decision making with teachers, parents, students, and the community in order to stimulate school improvement. Spurred by a growing body of research from the private sector on the benefits of participatory decision making, school leaders believe that SBM is a promising strategy for improving the quality of educational decision making because it effectively engages those closest to the students.

It has been argued that schools are bureaucracies that are highly centralized. However, "highly centralized systems are easily clogged with trivia. The result is inertia, pessimism, inefficiency, cynicism and long delays for decisions of any kind on the smallest matters. School-based management is an excellent antidote to bureaucracy" (English, 1989, p. 2). Writers have made a convincing case that SBM can work but that its success is directly proportional to the amount of authority delegated to the school site and the distribution of that authority at the site (Mutchler, 1989). Similarly, Conley (1989) concluded that school reform initiatives that include SBM through the use of SITs must take into consideration the distinction between authority and influence while making decisions in site councils, as well as the distinction between and among the different domains of decision making.

A reference was made earlier to the dichotomy between school restructuring, which state and other governmental bodies mandate, and actual improvement in current educational practices. Restructuring schools differs from simple school improvement initiatives or the effective schools movement in that restructuring rethinks the school's entire system of doing things, for example, SBM versus centralized control. Fennimore (1990) highlighted a key point regarding school principals who are involved with this type of sophisticated change. He described school principals as administrators who lead

by forming supportive school structures. The supportive school structures that principals form include teachers who are collaborators, mentors, and coaches; they also include community members and parents who are partners in promoting learning. Fennimore maintained that this restructuring is "a movement to promote higher-order learning for all students. By orchestrating schooling policies and structures with learning outcomes, restructuring advocates are helping schools redefine roles, responsibilities and relationships so that changes center on the improvement of learning" (p. 1).

An example of this type of reform was given by Murphy (1990) in a study of a Maryland school district that significantly improved academic outcomes for at-risk students by focusing their SIP on student outcomes, staff development, school control of budgets, and access to additional outside resources. In that study, effective teachers were found to be at the core of change. However, study findings also indicated that teachers thought they made more decisions than they actually did and that the decisions they made rarely were based on a vision for a total curriculum or change initiative.

Hall and Loucks (1979) asserted that some school reform efforts fail because not all stages of the improvement process are given adequate attention. These authors said that change is a process and not an event. Change is made first by individuals and then by an organization. Change is highly personal and involves growth in feelings and skills. Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) concurred with this assertion, adding that the change process actually goes through four phases of individual acceptance before any institutional change is realized. These phases are active initiation, participation, pressure, and support; they finally result in changes in the group's behavior, beliefs, and ownership. Fullan and Steigelbauer recommended that all professional development and

training take into account the phases of the change process and said that SITs need to be aware of this phenomenon.

A vast array of literature is available that does not support SBM or SIT initiatives as being effective in increasing student achievement. Cotton (1992) stated that several researchers have reported no direct link, positive or negative, between SBM and student achievement. A possible explanation for this finding might be flawed research results, but most SBM efforts that Cotton reviewed failed to deal with curriculum and instruction, which influence student outcomes. Improved student performance was usually not a stated goal for the SBM initiatives studied.

It has been reported that site councils often become disenchanted because the decisions they want to make differ from the decisions they are allowed to make. "Schools are sometimes asked to implement programs of school-based management while continuing to function within the constraints imposed by existing federal, state, school board, district and teacher union regulations. In these situations, school personnel sometimes find that there is very little left for them to manage" (p. 8). In addition, school staff often are reluctant to get involved in SBM or SITs because they fear trying new things, lack training, and fear that the ideas and proposals they generate will be blocked by central administration (Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989; J. E. Mitchell, 1990). A study completed in Salt Lake City by Malen and Ogawa (1988) corroborated this assertion. The authors observed that the structures thought to be conducive to broad-based decision making did not, in fact, lead to increases in parents' and teachers' influence on policy.

Another factor reported to be a barrier to successful implementation of SBM practices is a lack of focus on the projects being addressed by the SIT. David and Peterson (1984) concluded that it is difficult to achieve meaningful school-based change

and that the schools they studied concentrated primarily on the noninstructional aspects of schooling. Peterson (1991) reaffirmed that efforts and resources were spent primarily on superficial changes and claimed that the limited research conducted thus far has not supported SBM as a means of improving students' academic performance, possibly because so much SBM implementation is superficial and lacks the power to bring about meaningful change. Arterbury and Hord (1991) arrived at a similar conclusion in their study and cautioned that all "site-based decision making should be explicitly considered as a means to increase learner outcomes" (p. 7). They suggested that SBM can work when improving student achievement is designated as the primary goal. Taylor and Levine (1991) cautiously agreed with both research teams by stressing that SBM has a potential for helping schools but that there should be a reason for implementing this approach. Otherwise, site-based concepts will become "only a cosmetic attempt to improve the school" (p. 394).

A final barrier to the success of SBM initiatives, according to the literature, is the inability of individuals on SITs to do the job required of them. There are many pitfalls involved with mandated decentralization. "A school improvement impetus and authority emanating from outside the school does not produce the responsibility and commitment necessary to sustain consequential improvement" (Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988, p. 2). Highly rigid and inflexible district, state, and federal guidelines impede new approaches to teaching and learning, and the few reforms available to a SIT rarely are clear or coordinated (Williams & Newcombe, 1994). Site-based councils seem to be given extensive responsibilities, but many lack the qualifications to succeed. The teams generally lack knowledge of school operations and group-processing skills and are unclear about their role. Moreover, SITs usually attempt to make too many changes

36

simultaneously, and time becomes a factor as changes and mandates continue to be dictated (Cotton, 1992; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991).

<center>Organizational Behavior and Organizational Development</center>

Weick (1995) described organizations as communities, each having an individually established identity based on a unique set of values. Because schools are organizations, I was confident in assuming that, in any school improvement process, SITs must take into consideration the foibles inherent in organizational change. For instance, Sparks (1996) said that school districts and schools can be considered "complex organizations whose cultures promote certain behaviors and inhibit others. Staff development that focuses exclusively on the behavior of the individual teachers without recognizing the influence of the organization in supporting or suppressing new practices will fail" (p. 262).

This is true of any collaborative cultures, especially those found in public schools. Collaborative cultures in schools possess certain characteristics such as reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994). Structural conditions that SITs need to consider include time to meet, physical proximity issues, interdependency in teaching roles, and teacher empowerment. Social and human factors include openness to improvement, trust, respect, cognitive and skill-based teaching and learning, and supportive leadership.

Little (1982) asserted,

> The school, as a workplace, proves extraordinarily powerful. Without denying differences in individuals' skills, interests, commitment, curiosity, or persistence, the prevailing pattern of interactions and interpretations in each building demonstrably creates certain possibilities and sets certain limits. We are led from a focus on professional improvement as an individual enterprise to improvement

<center>37</center>

as particularly an organizational phenomenon. Some schools sustain shared expectations (norms) both for extensive collegial work and for analysis and evaluation of an experimentation with their practices; continuous improvement is a shared undertaking in these schools, and these schools are the most adaptable and successful of the schools we studied. (p. 338)

As some school reform literature has indicated, there is little or no evidence to justify SBM theories as being a positive reform initiative (Malen, Ogawa, & Kranz, 1990; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). Organizational studies complement the school reform literature explaining the relationships that exist in school communities. Mohrman, Lawler, and Mohrman (1992) argued that teachers perform intellectually complex tasks, are more effective when working collegially or in teams, and face uncertainty in their day-to-day work. Therefore, a high-involvement and decentralized-management strategy may be appropriate for schools as they work to design and implement strategies to increase student achievement and comply with state reform mandates. However, few site-based programs engage teachers in curriculum and instruction change, further limiting their effectiveness. SBM should entail more than just creating school site councils and giving them the power to make some decisions (Smylie, 1994).

This section of the literature review is intended to cover another aspect of reform and change as the discussion moves from studies on school reform to research that has been conducted primarily in the private sector. Work groups and teams are essential when bringing about organizational change. Work groups play a key role in shaping organization members' work attitudes and motivation (Hawkins & Elledge, 1993; Homans, 1950; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Researchers have found that, for teams to be effective, team members must possess fundamental group skills, understand that group-related problems have characteristic symptoms that can be diagnosed, and have clearly defined roles while accomplishing their projects (Smithers et al., 1996). Smithers

et al. asserted that "A fundamental assumption of all team development interventions is that in an organization, no individual can effectively function alone. Since groups represent a defining feature of organizations, effective work groups are essential for organizational effectiveness" (p. 311).

According to the literature, there are two broad types of groups in an organization: (a) functional groups, formalized units in an organization's structure that are listed on organizational charts; and (b) task groups, individuals who are brought together by a common goal and charged to complete a specific objective. A SIT most closely resembles a task group.

The organizational development and organizational behavior literature indicated that there are subtle differences between groups and teams. A group usually is defined as two or more people who interact with and influence one another (Shaw, 1981). A group also has been defined as "an organized system of two or more individuals who are interrelated so that the system performs some function, has a standard set of role relationships among its members, and has a set of norms that regulate the function of the group and each of its members" (McDavid & Harari, 1968, p. 237). On the other hand, a team represents special groups that specifically coordinate activities to achieve a common purpose (Plovnick, Fry, & Rubin, 1975).

Hackman (1990) described three attributes of what he called "work groups" in an effort to avoid confusion between the terminology of teams and groups. First, work groups are real groups with complete social systems, boundaries, interdependence, and roles. Members depend on one another for some shared purpose. Second, work groups have one or more tasks to perform. The group produces some outcome for which members have collective responsibility. All that is required is that the group produce an

outcome that can be identified as its product, and that it theoretically is possible to measure and evaluate that product. Finally, work groups operate in an organizational context. Basically, the group "manages relations with other individuals or groups in the larger social system in which the group operates. Frequently this social system is the parent organization" (Hackman, 1990, p. 4).

I used the words *group* and *team* interchangeably in this study and applied the definition of work group given above to both terms. Teams coordinate activities, plan strategies, cooperate, and require that members accept both individual and group accountability for their combined efforts (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Writers on organizational development have asserted that, from formation to completion, teams and groups progress through specific, distinct changes as they mature. Specific examples of this progression are illustrated by formalized models, such as the five-stage model of group development (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) and punctuated equilibrium (Gersick, 1988, 1989). These models underscore the assertion that groups change and develop and that understanding these changes is critical in determining group effectiveness.

All teams, including SITs, must successfully complete their tasks and goals, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and effectively adapt and change as organizational conditions change. It is therefore imperative that team members understand and practice the requisite strategies necessary for team to be considered effective. Without this knowledge, a team will not be able to operate efficiently or coordinate its members' efforts (Smithers et al., 1996).

People have written volumes with regard to providing time, effort, thought, and resources to effective team-building strategies for organizations. Team-building

strategies address problems related to group functioning and provide clues as to what makes teams ineffective. Although it was not a specific emphasis of this study, I recognize that team building usually is attempted because of a strongly felt need to improve conditions that are interfering with the achievement of organizational goals. Many theorists who have dealt with improving these processes have asserted that effectiveness can be enhanced and production or attainment of goals increased through that enhancement (Beckhard, 1969; Beer, 1976; Dayal & Thomas, 1968; Dyer, 1987; Harrison, 1976; Porras & Robertson, 1992; Smithers et al., 1996; Varney, 1989). Writers have recognized that most team-building research is methodologically flawed. However, findings have highlighted the importance of teams and promoted positive change through enhanced decision-making and problem-solving abilities in at least some organizations (Nicholas, 1982; Porras & Berg, 1978; Woodman & Sherwood, 1980; Woodman & Wayne, 1985).

<u>Group or Team Effectiveness</u>

Hackman (1990) described a work group or team as having three main attributes. First, it is a real group and the members depend on one another for some shared purpose. The group is essentially an intact social system with boundaries, interdependence among members, and differentiated roles. A work group has one or more tasks to perform, and it produces some outcome for which members have collective responsibility. All that is required is that the group produce an outcome that can be identified as its product, and that it theoretically is possible to measure and evaluate that product. Finally, the group operates in an organizational context. "This means that the group, as a collective, manages relations with other individuals or groups in the larger social system in which the group operates. Frequently this social system is the parent organization" (p. 4).

41

Hackman explained that it is hard to measure a group's effectiveness outside a laboratory experience because few organizational tasks have clear right and wrong answers. But a healthy productive group, or the functioning of a group, can be measured using three main factors that determine effectiveness. First,

> A group's productive output (that is, its product, service, or decision) meets the standards of quantity, quality, and timeliness of the people who receive, review, and/or use that output. The second dimension is the degree to which the process of carrying out the work enhances the capability of members to work together interdependently in the future. The third dimension is the degree to which the group experience contributes to the growth and personal well-being of team members. (Hackman, 1990, p. 7)

Hackman asserted that determining how well teams perform involves much more than counting or measuring outputs because assessments of task performance depend on standards specified by members of the group's social system and not necessarily those a researcher would choose. If a researcher is not careful, he or she might try to sort out the effects of each possible determinant of team effectiveness, which can lead to the conclusion that no single factor has a very powerful effect, "a conclusion reached by more than one reviewer of the group performance literature" (Hackman, 1990, p. 8).

As indicated in the literature on school reform, SITs are being required to plan and implement strategies to meet specific student outcomes through mandated SIPs. Effectiveness is therefore required in two areas, process and product, and both need to be considered, especially in training scenarios. Sparks (1997) believed that staff development, one area of school improvement, "must change if it is to prepare teachers and administrators to successfully implement content standards. It must be results-driven, standards-based, and demonstrate high expectations for the learning and performance of students and staff alike" (p. 20).

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) has endorsed teams and consensus in their school reform publications and has moved a step further than simply recommending staff development as the only strategy for SITs to use. NCREL (1999) claimed that, within each school, consensus is both the prerequisite and the outcome of a comprehensive, shared decision-making process at the site. Teachers, parents, and community members, key members of a SIT, need to have the skills to diagnose school problems so that they can understand why the school needs to restructure.

Skills also are necessary to accomplish new and ambitious goals that may be a part of the SIP. Teachers, in particular, need to be centrally involved in designing the school and classroom organization, curriculum, and instruction strategies to accomplish these new goals. Involving all teachers on one or more teacher decision-making teams may be an effective route toward achieving teacher consensus on these large school-site changes (Raack, 1998).

Maeroff (1993) noted that there are advantages to working in teams. He cited several documented examples of teams' abilities in implementing complex plans and creating varied solutions to difficult problems. In addition, he maintained that teams build commitment and support for new ideas among staff and community members, and they are part of the learning process for professionals in schools. Maeroff cautioned, though, that experts who advocate the use of teams in an organization need to make the following assumptions in order to justify their position:

1. Those closest to the work know best how to perform and improve their jobs.

2. Most employees want to feel that they own their jobs and are making meaningful contributions to the effectiveness of their organizations.

3. Teams provide possibilities for empowerment that are not available to individual employees.

Fullan (1993) stated that teams seem to function more successfully when members have a shared culture that promotes collaboration. When team members share values and hopes, teams can flourish. However, Fullan cited some conditions that may influence the effectiveness of teams, especially negative time trade-offs. These arise when team members are engaging in decision making, thus resulting in lost time working in the classroom, on curriculum, and on instructional activities. In addition, problems of "group think" crop up, increasing pressure to conform in order to complete a task. Thus the possibility of conflict occurring through collaborative decision making is increased.

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) stated that teams need to be adequately trained and prepared for their responsibilities. If they are not, it is unlikely that they will work effectively or develop a shared vision. Barriers that these authors cited that could defeat the benefits a team can provide include teams' being too large, having resistant members with high influence, and teams' not having members with complementary skill levels. Other barriers include not having a meaningful purpose, goal, and plan for completion or mutually felt accountability or leadership.

The research that was reviewed with regard to SITs' effectiveness in organizations experiencing change can be synthesized into the following key areas: organizational team requirements, participants of the team, and barriers to team effectiveness (NCREL, 1999). Writers also have asserted that teams must have the power to implement change, the knowledge and skills necessary to plan for change, information to make accurate decisions, and rewards for participating members. Power for a SIT means that a well-informed, competent team has the authority to make

44

decisions about the best application of resources and the best educational practices to use. The school team has authority over the budget, which it can spend in any way it chooses, subject only to limits on the total amount. It also has authority to recruit, select, develop, and evaluate personnel. Further, the school site needs to involve all teachers in decision-making roles through vertical and horizontal decision-making teams.

Knowledge and skills in at least four areas help employees achieve high performance and improve outcomes. These skills include interpersonal or team skills for working together effectively, technical knowledge and skills for providing the required service, skills for engaging in multiple tasks, and business knowledge for managing budgets and other fiscal matters. Developing such knowledge and skills implies a substantial, ongoing investment in human resource development. It also implies a schoolwide capacity for change, a sense of professional community, and a shared curriculum and instructional knowledge base (Raack, 1998).

Employees need information about organizational goals, levels of performance, and key parameters of work processes so that they can make decisions that lead to establishing organizational objectives and achieving high performance. Employees need information on district and site revenues, costs, cost structures, customer satisfaction, benchmarks with other schools, and the environment. The most effective schools create vertical and horizontal communication channels and actively seek to share information throughout the school community. Rewards are used to align the self-interest of the faculty with the objectives of the organization (Raack, 1998).

The literature revealed that three types of participants are involved with SBM or SITs: teachers, principals, and community members. Each has a role to fill, and each is integral to the team's success. Teachers, as members of a SIT, need to become more

involved in schoolwide issues rather than just classroom concerns. As a result, they must participate as active members on one or more teacher decision-making teams. Teachers need to engage in several professional development activities as they work toward various SIT initiatives, based on a published SIP. They need to work with colleagues to develop a sense of professional community and a schoolwide set of effective teaching strategies. They primarily need to take responsibility for the student achievement results of their collective efforts (Raack, 1998). For SBM strategies to work, principals need to trade their direct leadership role for one that allows teachers to make decisions. NCREL (1999) recommended that principals become experts in budgeting as the school develops its own budget and should involve teachers in recruiting, selecting, developing, and evaluating all staff. As effective human resource managers, principals need to become brokers of information, garnering professional knowledge and programs that can help teachers accomplish school goals. They need to take advantage of professional development and training opportunities, become entrepreneurs for additional resources, and protect teachers from distractions originating in the school, the central office, or the community. Principals are key players, helping to create school visions by fostering a culture that supports shared decision making and collegial approaches to school actions. They also need to develop reward structures that provide meaningful intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for teachers' new efforts, and they must manage complex change processes as the school organization, curriculum, and instruction are restructured. Finally, principals need to act as liaisons between the school and its customers, including parents, community members, the central office, and the school board (Raack, 1998)).

Community members need to become involved in setting school policy by serving on SITs and communicating local needs and expectations for student performance

through team membership. Community members can provide specific resources and other support for the school as it develops and implements new strategies (Raack, 1998).

NCREL (1999) noted several implementation pitfalls regarding SBM, SITs, and SIPs. The laboratory's researchers asserted that designing and implementing effective SBM programs in education presents many challenges. One such challenge is decentralizing power and placing that power solely with a SIT. Four key domains discussed earlier—power, knowledge, information, and rewards—need to be decentralized, and vertical and horizontal decision-making teams created. Another challenge is directing the efforts of an effective shared decision-making process toward curriculum, instruction, and student achievement without falling into the trap of implementing programs with no focus or direction in mind.

Releasing teachers from their classroom responsibilities in order to involve them in a variety of schoolwide efforts that, over time, make the school a high-performance educational organization is another challenge that NCREL researchers cited. This involves finding time for teachers to engage in the added responsibility of effective school-based decision making. Meeting this challenge usually means restructuring both the school organization and the teacher's job, including how the teacher spends his or her time. Using an accountability system with real consequences, sanctions, and rewards and sticking with a decentralized decision-making plan, rather than adding a new layer of regulations about how decisions should be made, was the last challenge cited (Raack, 1998).

Conclusions

Research has indicated that teams or work groups involved in implementing change in an organization such as a school can perform either effectively or ineffectively.

The literature on organizational development, organizational behavior, school reform, and team effectiveness all presented similar findings. Although there have been many replications of findings, one clear admonition concerning team performance has consistently been repeated: Those who form and lead work groups should focus their efforts on creating conditions that support effective team performance rather than managing the group, as this type of an approach is congruent with the facts of life in social systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Also, SIT products or results are key to effective teamwork. Teams or work groups in organizations outside of education are created to complete specific tasks designed to complement the organization as a whole. School improvement efforts that do not have increasing student achievement as their major goal have been found to be superficial and generally unsuccessful. A growing body of research that is results oriented has just started to have an influence on SIP. The success of school improvement initiatives and SITs depends on how effectively the team selects, defines, and measures progress and how well it adjusts its efforts and strategies toward the goal of increasing student achievement. "School goals tell teachers what should be emphasized instructionally and define for schools and teachers how they should gauge their performance success" (Schmoker, 1999, p. 25). SITs that base their initiatives solely on improving student achievement seem to experience the best results and therefore exhibit the characteristics of effective teams.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to describe the functioning of SITs and to

determine the extent to which these teams evidence effective organizational principles for

groups as they plan and implement strategies for school improvement. A secondary

purpose was to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this

study differ with regard to team effectiveness. In the first two chapters, I described the

nature of this research and discussed the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The

methodology used in fulfilling the study purpose is described in this chapter.

The literature was clear in detailing how groups are called upon to complete

varied tasks and accept many responsibilities within an organization. The literature

reviewed for this study concerning team effectiveness was extensive and explicit in the

areas of organizational development and organizational behavior, but not so specific with

regard to SITs. Are the teams in schools configured similarly to those in other

organizational settings, and if so, do they vary in effectiveness?

The attention that SITs pay to effective team functioning and the extent to which

leaders of SITs are interested in managing the group's actions as opposed to creating

conditions that support group effectiveness became a major interest of mine. I assumed

that a relationship or pattern would exist between effective team functioning and school

achievement in the various cases. To test my assumptions in this qualitative study, I used

Hackman's (1990) three-dimensional conception of group effectiveness as a theory and a

model. The objective was to test and verify this theory as a basis for developing an

49

understanding of how SITs differ. By advancing Hackman's theory, collecting data to test it, and reflecting on whether the theory was confirmed or disconfirmed, I was better able to describe how the selected teams worked and interacted. Hackman's theory became the framework for the entire study, an organizational model for the research questions, the foundation for the hypotheses, and an influence on the data-collection process.

The methodological approach used in the study is described in detail in this chapter. All five components of a research design are explained, including the study's questions, its propositions, its unit of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. The populations, settings, sample, data collection, and data analysis are discussed and clarified. In addition, validity issues are discussed, limitations to the study are delineated, and ethical considerations considered.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that was posed to guide the collection of data for this study is: How does the functioning of SITs, assessed in terms of organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness criteria, differ in schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement? Several subsidiary questions also were posed:

1. What are SITs called upon to do?

2. How do the literature and current thinking concerning team effectiveness apply to SITs?

3. Why do SITs that appear to be configured similarly vary in their effectiveness?

4. To what extent do SIT members pay attention to criteria for effective team functioning?

5. To what extent are leaders of SITs interested in managing the group's actions, as opposed to creating conditions that support team effectiveness?

Methodological Approach

The advantages and disadvantages of qualitative and quantitative methods have been a subject of debate for many years in the social science literature (Cook & Reichardt, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Arguments against quantitative methods include dehumanization due to numerical representation of human tendencies and a lack of understanding caused by little intimate acquaintance with the subjects and problems that could better be described with qualitative data and methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). Those who advocate quantitative methods respond that qualitative data are expensive to gather, highly subjective, open to misinterpretation, and contain information that is rarely collected uniformly across all cases (Rossi & Freeman, 1993). Thus, to draw on the advantages of both methods, I gathered a combination of qualitative and quantitative data in this study.

In the qualitative aspect of this study, I examined how the functioning of SITs differed from team to team. I also examined and described the extent to which these teams evidenced use of effective organizational behavior for groups. This was done by identifying relationships among several variables pertaining to team effectiveness and school achievement. Although I did not and could not determine the causes of these relationships, I was able to suggest them.

Initially, I considered using correlational analysis, a form of causal-comparative research, as the methodology for this study. The relationships between at least two

51

variables were being studied, with no attempt to influence them. I would have needed to do this through the use of a correlation coefficient (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). I had thought that this would be a convenient way to use quantitative data generated through surveys and other hard data to test my initial perceptions.

However, I chose a multiple-case study with cross-case analysis as the methodological approach because it was "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The method provided more opportunities to learn because the study entailed a technically distinctive situation in which there were many more variables of interest than data points.

For instance, some results relied heavily on multiple sources of evidence, with data converging in a triangulating fashion, and other results benefited from "the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 14). "The interest was in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Using this methodological approach also helped me explain the human behaviors that took place in the SITs that were studied. This methodology was useful in clarifying and promoting an understanding of the important processes that were taking place by identifying relationships among several variables as they related to different schools and the complexity of SITs' effectiveness.

Population and Sample

In this study, I employed a multistage sampling design. Initially, I reviewed all schools in Michigan using the *1999 Michigan School Report*. The total school population was narrowed to 365 middle schools with a grades 6-8 configuration. By identifying 186

52

NCA-accredited middle schools in this group, I further narrowed the field. I then assessed the 186 schools, using demographic data such as percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches, pupil enrollment, pupil-teacher ratio, foundation allowance per pupil, current per pupil expenditure, total revenue per pupil, and average teacher salary. Student achievement in these schools was assessed using the state-reported aggregate MEAP scores for each school in Math 7, Reading 7, Science 8, and Writing 8 (1996-1999). The status of each school's three- to five-year SIP, parent conference participation, gender-equity attainment, and current accreditation status also were gathered, coded, and evaluated. These data were obtained from the *1999 Michigan School Report* and individual schools' annual reports.

Six schools that had similar demographics but varying levels of student academic achievement were selected from this group. SITs from these six middle schools became the sample for this study. The selected SITs had an average membership of 10 to 12 people.

Selection of groups for the sample was purposive or judgmental, being based on demographic data. Purposeful sampling was used because it is done with the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight into a particular phenomenon and therefore must select a sample from whom he or she can learn the most (Merriam, 1998).

Because the sample was small, all members of the SIT in each of the six schools or cases were surveyed. As stated earlier, demographic characteristics influenced which schools were used in the case studies. Hence, the overall sample was stratified so that schools having the specific characteristics of interest were represented and the sample reflected the true characteristics of the population (Fowler, 1988). Every effort was made

to ensure that the demographic characteristics I used in stratifying the sample were proportionate to the size of the strata (Miller, 1991). The procedure for selecting the sample was determined solely by analyzing data from the *1999 Michigan School Report.* All cases were selected so that they could either predict similar results, evidencing a literal replication, or produce contrasting results but for predictable reasons, evidencing a theoretical replication (Yin, 1994).

Design and Procedures

Rossi and Freeman (1993) stated that a study design needs to take into account two competing pressures.

> On the one hand, evaluations should be undertaken with sufficient rigor so that relatively firm conclusions can be reached; on the other hand, practical considerations of time, money, cooperation, and protection of human subjects limit the design options and methodological procedures that can be employed. (p. 215).

The authors referred to this logic as the good-enough rule. Stated simply, the good-enough rule is that "the evaluator should choose the best possible design from a methodological standpoint, having taken into account the potential importance of the program, the practicality and feasibility of each design, and the probability that the design chosen will produce useful and credible results" (p. 221). The design that was used in this research project follows Rossi and Freeman's rule.

Once the schools or cases were selected, data collected from the *1999 Michigan School Report,* a survey completed by SIT members, interviews with principals, and information obtained from site documents were compared with criteria of SIT effectiveness to explore whether any relationships existed within individual cases. A cross-case analysis was then carried out, using the theory already explained as "a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that presents a systematic view of

phenomena by specifying relationships among variables, with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena" (Kerlinger, 1979, p. 64). This descriptive theory was not used in an attempt to express a cause-and-effect relationship but instead was used to cover the scope and breadth of all the cases (Yin, 1993).

It was my intention to discover whether certain relationships or patterns existed between the characteristics of SITs in six middle schools and the extent to which these teams exhibited team effectiveness. Did ineffective team characteristics exist, and if so, to what extent? Would specific relationships be discovered between the functioning of SITs and their effectiveness? These and other relationships that might be discovered would not establish cause and effect, but the patterns would provide a basis for explaining and describing the results (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Nevertheless, even though discovering a pattern or relationship does not establish a causal connection, I did try to gain some idea of cause and effect. Whatever relationships were found, they could serve as a focus for additional research. It therefore became important to seek associations among the many team-effectiveness variables that were evidenced in the SITs I studied.

Data-Collection Methods

It was necessary to have materials organized in a specific way so as not to become confused as I collected data for and completed the case study reports. The data and materials that were collected needed to be readily available for reference and analysis; hence, I needed to establish a database. Yin (1994) referred to this as a case study database, and Patton (1990) called it the case record. The case study database or record of information, as defined for this research, comprised the data collected from all of the cases, which were organized so that I could locate specific data during intensive analysis.

55

The organizational matrix for the data analysis, showing how the data were gathered and

analyzed in order to answer the main research question and subquestions, is depicted in

Figure 3.1. This figure was derived from research on the case study method (see Yin,

Bateman, & Moore, 1983).

1999 Michigan School Report

The *1999 Michigan School Report* was published and disseminated by the

Michigan Department of Education. It contains data collected on 17 variables from all

schools in Michigan. The variables are explained and defined in Appendix A. The data

in the *1999 Michigan School Report* reflect the findings for the years 1996 through 1999.

I downloaded this information from the Internet and placed the data fields in several

Excel formats. I then used the Excel files to narrow the sampling field. Once the

samples had been chosen, I imported the information I had gleaned to a Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program to codify and use the

demographic and academic achievement data. These data were compared with the

survey and interview responses and site documents to further aid in identifying patterns

or relationships of interest.

Document Analysis (1996 Through 1999)

Every school must publish an annual SIP reporting its goals, strategies for

improvement, and data supporting its school improvement initiatives. Every school also

must prepare an annual report with specific quantitative and qualitative information and

make this report available to the community it serves. Information contained in these

reports pertains primarily to the outcomes of the school's published SIP. These site

documents are in the public domain. Both the SIP and the annual report guidelines are

defined in Appendix B.

Define & Design   Prepare-Collect-Analyze   Analyze &Conclude
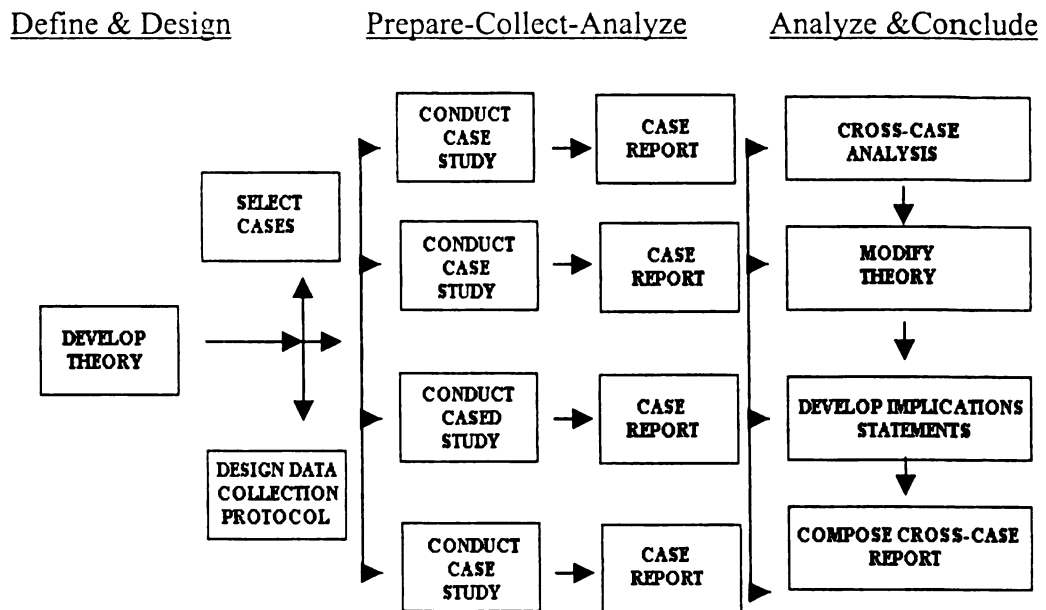
Figure 3.1:   Organizational matrix for data collection and data analysis in this multiple-
case study with cross-case analysis (adapted from Yin, 1994).

I requested copies of the SIPs and annual reports from the selected schools and

reviewed them. Information obtained from these documents formed the basis for

determining whether the sites were adhering to state mandates. The documents also

provided benchmarks and detailed scoring to determine achievement and attainment of

school improvement initiatives.

Survey of SIT Members

Advantages to using a survey include economy of design, rapid turn-around in

data collection, and ability to identify attributes of a population from a small group of

individuals (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985; Sudman & Bradburn, 1986). I designed the survey

instrument that was used to collect information from SIT members. The survey

contained 51 questions, in addition to demographic items. Questions pertained to Hackman's (1990) process criteria of effectiveness (e.g., group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting) and criteria of group effectiveness (e.g., ample effort, sufficient knowledge and skill, and task-appropriate performance strategies developed).

The survey was mailed to SIT members due to considerations of cost, availability, and convenience. Individuals who would be receiving questionnaires were initially notified of this in a letter of introduction, explaining the purpose of the study. The following week they received a letter explaining the survey, a consent-to-participate form, and a copy of the survey (see Appendix C). Two weeks later, a follow-up letter was sent to the schools.

Survey responses were placed in fields in the SPSS system. I then analyzed the data to identify potential patterns or relationships within and across the cases. The survey responses provided a quantitative and numeric description of this fraction of the population—the sample—through the data-collection process of asking people questions (Fowler, 1988). The survey results were used in drawing inferences about specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of this population (Babbie, 1990).

Site Visits and Interviews

A primary source of data for this study was site visits conducted with each principal and SIT in the selected schools. The visits were necessary because, regardless of the criteria used to measure effectiveness, these measures could provide only a good starting point for identifying and understanding organizational problems and provided only a rough framework for diagnosis and data interpretation. Hence, it was necessary to gain additional insight into the individual cases by gathering qualitative data that would

provide for a richer description. "Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit" (Patton, 1990, p. 278).

In addition, I interviewed the principal of each school. The interview protocol included the same questions as those in the survey mailed to SIT members (see Appendix C).

Data-Analysis Techniques

I used both qualitative (interview responses and site documents) and quantitative (survey responses and *1999 Michigan School Report* statistics) data in the data analysis. Because the data were derived from many sources, communicating understanding was my main goal in analyzing the data and reporting the findings (Merriam, 1998). Rossi and Freeman (1993) asserted that "evaluating established programs requires understanding the social and political situation when they were initiated and tracing the ways in which they have been modified from their emergence until the time of evaluation" (p. 142).

In this multiple-case study, I analyzed the data first for the individual cases and then across cases. The cross-case analysis led to generalizations or identifications of patterns or relationships from which to build abstractions or match patterns across cases (Campbell, 1969, 1975; Merriam, 1998). I looked for patterns or potential patterns using the theoretical perspective developed to see whether SITs behaved in ways that were consistent or inconsistent with criteria given in research on effective teams. I anticipated being able "to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though cases will vary in their details" (Yin, 1994, p. 112). I also tested "processes and outcomes that occur across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local

59

conditions, and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 172).

Validity

Construct Validity

A major criticism of case studies is that the researcher fails to develop a sufficiently operational set of measures and uses too many subjective judgments in collecting data (Yin, 1994). To guard against this, I chose for the sample schools with similar demographic characteristics, resources, and student achievement indicators. I measured team effectiveness using established criteria derived from the organizational behavior, organizational development, and human resources theories. I attempted to meet the test of construct validity by using multiple sources of evidence to measure the variables of interest, according to the original objectives of the study. Table D.1 in Appendix D indicates, through the use of the study's research question and subquestions, that the selected measures reflected the specific conditions that needed to be studied (Yin, 1994).

Internal Validity

The first threat to internal validity, establishing a causal relationship, was not applicable to this case study because no causal relationship was sought (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979). The second threat to internal validity in a case study, making inferences from the data, was avoided by using pattern-matching logic based on the theory developed for this research as an empirically based study with a predicted outcome demonstrated by the theoretical models previously described (Yin, 1994).

External Validity

External validity is a major problem with case studies because they do not involve statistical generalization but rather analytical generalization. A theory must be used (Yin, 1994). Therefore, findings from the study were generalized using Hackman's theory; multiple cases were employed to test the theory. It was necessary to "look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within each case, understand the local dynamics, before we can see patterning of variables that transcends particular cases" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 205-206).

Reliability

I attempted to minimize errors and bias in this study by meticulous documenting the procedures followed in developing the case study protocol and constructing the database to allow for future replication. Evidence for the individual case studies came from three major sources: documents, archival records, and interviews/surveys. I followed three overriding principles during data collection to enhance reliability. First, multiple sources of evidence were used to converge on the same set of facts or findings. Second, a case study database representing a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the final case report was developed. Finally, a specific chain of evidence representing explicit links between the research questions, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn was developed (Yin, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

According to Rudestam and Newton (1992), two main ethical issues exist in all social science research involving human subjects. These are "the need for fully informed consent to participate and the need to emerge from the experience unharmed" (p. 196).

Each individual who participated in the survey process signed an informed consent form (Appendix C). In all of the data gathered and reported in this study, the identities of individual participants were protected. Public-domain data were assigned numerical codes or pseudonyms and were stored in a locked file. In addition, before I began the survey process, I obtained permission to conduct the study from the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS; see Appendix E).

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that I am a central office administrator of a public school district, as well as a former middle school principal. I have a past association with two of the middle schools included in this study, having been a principal for a time in each building. Two of the schools studied were also in a district where I was employed as a curriculum specialist. Therefore, bias may exist in my role as a researcher who was personally involved in past school improvement efforts with four of the schools or cases involved in this study.

CHAPTER IV

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS: SIX CASE STUDIES

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidenced effective organizational principles for groups as they planned and implemented strategies for school improvement. A secondary purpose was to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this study differed with regard to team effectiveness. The case studies of six Michigan middle schools—Spruce, Oak, Elm, Poplar, Maple, and Willow Middle Schools—are presented in this chapter. Background information for each school is given, and the school's demographic characteristics and assessment results and discussed. This is followed by a description of the people involved with the SIT in that school. Evidence concerning team and group effectiveness is presented, and the current operating status of the SIT is addressed.

The SITs are described using Hackman's process criteria of effectiveness as a lens. This three-dimensional conception of enhancing indicators for group effectiveness serves as a useful and precise model for evaluating how effective a group or team may be. Hackman (1990) asserted that an effective group must "exert sufficient effort to accomplish the task at an acceptable level of performance, bring adequate knowledge and skill to bear on the task work and employ task performance strategies that are appropriate to the work and to the setting in which it is being performed" (p. 9). For the purposes of this study, the six SITs were examined and described in light of these process criteria in order to characterize their effectiveness.

Hackman's model highlights three aspects of groups' performance situation: "the structure of the group itself, the organizational context in which the group operates, and the availability of team-oriented coaching and process assistance" (p. 10). In this chapter, I describe group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting by noting examples and observations of ample effort, sufficient knowledge and skill, and task-appropriate performance strategies presented in the cases. These are further analyzed through nine criteria. These include motivational structure of group tasks, organizational reward systems, and the ability to remedy coordination problems and build group commitment. Group composition, the organizational education system, and the ability to remedy inappropriate weighting of member inputs while fostering cross-training activities are also detailed. Group norms that regulate member behavior and foster scanning and planning, organizational information systems, and the ability to remedy implementation problems and foster creativity in strategy development are the remaining criteria reviewed.

Spruce Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Spruce Middle School had 839 students in attendance and 41 certified teachers. The administrative team comprised the principal and an assistant principal. Spruce was experiencing a period of declining enrollment, having moved from a population of 862 in 1997 to its present number, with continued projections of loss over the next three years. Some enrollment was recouped when the district exercised a schools-of-choice option, but the loss of students and subsequent state revenue had caused budget difficulties. Three teaching positions were eliminated, and it took two years to formalize an agreement for a one-year contract with the teachers'

64

union. At the time of this study, negotiations for the next year were already in progress. A new principal had been hired that fall but was not the hiring committee's choice because she had no previous experience in a middle school.

Spruce Middle School finished a $5-million renovation project in 1997, in anticipation of growth that did not materialize. The remodeled facility was technologically current and well maintained. The foundation allowance for the past three years ranged from $5,583 to $5,737, and the free and reduced-price lunch population had declined from a high of 15.3% to the current 14.1%. Total revenue generated per pupil equaled $6,775, with current operating expenditures calculated at $4,184 per student. The average teacher salary at the time of the study was $49,327.

The community Spruce represented was going through a change, as it was fast becoming a bedroom community for a larger metropolitan area located 14 miles from its border. Average new-housing costs exceeded $200,000, although the housing market had been slumping for the past two years. In general, new buyers were professionals and had few children. The community was more than 95% white.

Student-Achievement Results

Spruce Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.1. Notable observations from the data for 1996 through 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 69.4% satisfactory to 85.5% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 54.3% satisfactory to 67.7% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose from 22.9% satisfactory to 34.6% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped from 81.6% satisfactory to 59.7% satisfactory.

Table 4.1: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Spruce Middle School: 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	15.3%	15.2%	14.1%
Building enrollment	862	848	839
Pupil-teacher ratio	22.6	22.6	22.6
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,583	$5,737	$5,737
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$4,185	$4,184	na
Total revenue per pupil	$6,438	$6,775	na
Average teacher salary	$49,125	$49,327	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	75.2	87.0	84.9
Math—4th grade	69.4	81.6	85.5
Math—7th grade	63.5	68.5	72.5
Reading—4th grade	45.3	62.4	67.7
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	54.4	72.0	53.8
Science—8th grade	22.9	29.3	34.6
Writing—5th grade	75.7	91.0	76.3
Writing—8th grade	81.6	72.8	59.7
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

Document Review

Spruce Middle School provided detailed documentation of the school's past and present SIP strategies. I reviewed annual reports for the past five years, three SIPs, minutes and agendas for SIT meetings held during the past three years, a profile report of the school and community, and their most recent NCA yearly report.

The three- to five-year SIPs for the past three years met all of the criteria

established by the state. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured. A

detailed accounting of the successes and failures of the initiatives also was included. The

school designated math and reading as high priorities for the past three years, and the

reported scores showed gains in these areas. Gender-equity problems in these areas also

improved. New goals in science and writing were being developed. Parent conference

participation had declined from a high of 96% in 1999 to a low of 82% in 1999.

SIT Observations

I had an opportunity to observe a SIT meeting at the school site. The meeting

began exactly when scheduled, and an agenda was provided to all in attendance. Twelve

participants were at the meeting, down from the usual 22, because this meeting was

specifically scheduled for chairs and co-chairs of five established target-goal committees.

The chairperson of the SIT, a teacher at the school, was present, as were the principal, a

parent representative, a community member, one secretary, one teaching assistant, and

six teachers.

The chairperson opened the meeting with a welcome and moved immediately to

the agenda, stating, "We're all busy people, so let's get going. I expect we will be

finished by 3:30 today" (SIT observation, March 14, 2001). Five target-goal chairs gave

progress reports, and each distributed a handout to the assembled team. The chairpersons

who were present represented committees that dealt with critical thinking and problem

solving, current issues, citizenship, crisis team, and marketing. When each individual

report was finished, five minutes were allowed for questions and input. In all cases, the

reports detailed processes that had been carried out or that were in progress. No

reference was made to student achievement, student progress, or student work. The elected secretary of the group, an instructional aide at the building, took minutes.

The second part of the meeting started at approximately 3:05 and was devoted to the writing committee chair, who expressed concern that the committee's task was becoming formidable. She explained that a majority of the faculty would probably resist the recommended strategies that her group had developed. "By the time a teacher completes these activities and assesses them," she said, "there will be no time to teach anything else. How can we expect staff to do this, and where will the money come from to pay for the formal assessments?" (SIT observation, March 14, 2001). The group decided to devote the next meeting, to be held in two weeks, to the writing issues when everyone was present. The meeting adjourned at 3:25.

As I observed the meeting, I took notes not only on what was taking place but also on who was talking. Each of the 12 participants spoke at least twice during the meeting. The chair would formally recognize a speaker when a new topic from the agenda was introduced; once a speaker was recognized, the conversation was free flowing and pertinent to the topic at hand. No one person was observed to be dominating the discussion. All discussion during the meeting pertained to the development of goals, objectives, and strategies. Adult roles and concerns were discussed, as were time lines and reporting deadlines. Student achievement was not brought up during any of the discussions.

After the meeting was adjourned, several members remained and asked as well as answered questions. I determined from this dialogue that the room they met in was specifically allocated to the team on a year-around basis. The room had a telephone, desk, meeting table and chairs, file cabinets, and a computer linked to the Internet. The

committee had a budget of $4,500 per year, and the co-chairs received a $1,500 yearly stipend. Agendas for each meeting were always typed and minutes provided to all members within two days following a meeting. If no agenda was ready, the meeting would be cancelled.

The SIT chair or co-chair facilitated all meetings, and all members received reminders of a meeting three days in advance. The SIT comprised two middle school administrators, eight teachers, four parents, one board member, one community member, one secretary, two instructional aides, the school liaison police officer, a counselor, and a social worker. No students were members; however, the student council advisor was a member and regularly brought input from the students.

The group who talked with me were adamant about record keeping; they prided themselves on the documents they had on hand and willingly provided me with copies. Because the meeting was formal, I asked whether this was simply because I was there. Laughter ensued, and members explained that this was the way a previous administrator had taught them to do it. The group had adopted this as a norm for doing business. The current principal added that she, too, was surprised at the formality and told the group, "As you know, I'm quite new to this and am playing catch-up at this point" (SIT observation, March 14, 2001).

My observations of this group led me to conclude that meetings were formal, and process was important. The group worked efficiently, and no one person dominated a discussion.

Survey Results

Twenty-two surveys were mailed to Spruce Middle School SIT members, and 10 were returned. The survey contained 51 questions, in addition to demographic items. I

charted answers in a frequency distribution table, recording them in appropriate categories reflecting Hackman's process criteria of effectiveness regarding group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting. I analyzed responses according to Hackman's criteria of group effectiveness in the areas of ample effort, sufficient knowledge and skill, and task-appropriate performance strategies developed.

Respondents assessed ample effort in the group as high, with emphasis given to group motivation to do well. They expressed doubt as to whether the group's work was meaningful or effective. Respondents reported that if rewards were given, the group rather than individuals was recognized. However, survey responses still indicated that rewards were not necessarily an impetus to do well. Further, respondents said that the group received little or no assistance in remedying coordination problems and building group commitment, but they did validate that time and resources were provided that might enhance commitment within the group. Respondents said the group was led by current members and not administrators. They also said the group was skilled in resolving conflict and worked interdependently with one another.

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group composition, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. Respondents said they were clear on the task and purpose of the SIT. Most indicated that the team was large enough to complete its tasks and that the members were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals. Group members did not agree on whether the SIT represented all stakeholders of the school.

The team seemed confident in their skill level and reported that training was not a high priority for them or the organization they represented. "There is no time" and "We

would never complete the process" were two responses from the survey. If any training did take place, it was at the request of the team and not administrators. No training for group effectiveness was reported. Although initial responses indicated that the team worked well together and was skilled, respondents indicated that not all members participated equally. All members thought they shared equally in decision making, had equal influence, and no weighting for any individual participant was evident.

The last area explored in the survey was task-appropriate performance strategies as they related to group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting. Respondents indicated that meetings were held regularly, formal procedures were in place, and the team had the ability to work together frequently and operate within a set budget. However, the majority indicated that they had no say as to how the budget was spent. Respondents indicated that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, determined how the data were interpreted, and had full authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on those data. They reported no pressure from administrators or the district to implement ideas that originated outside the group. Responses were similar in the areas of group norms and the organizational information systems.

With regard to remedying implementation problems and fostering creativity in strategy development, responses did not reflect team members' earlier replies concerning motivation, knowledge, and skill. Respondents indicated that they were not sure whether the plans and strategies they developed were effective or not. Respondents indicated that, although they thought they received adequate assistance and resources to complete the process of school improvement, day-to-day operations of the school were ignored. A

majority of respondents indicated little interest in or knowledge of any assistance that may have been provided to the team.

Principal Interview

Mrs. Gates had been the principal of Spruce Middle School for about eight months. Before that, she had taught for five years and had been a high school principal for seven years. This was her first assignment with middle school children and teachers. We were able to talk for two hours, two days after my observation of the SIT and conversation with SIT members after the meeting. The interview was designed to follow the same line of questioning as the survey developed for SIT members. I sought her thoughts on and understanding of team effectiveness criteria in the areas of group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting.

Mrs. Gates was not experienced in nor did she indicate an interest in the school improvement process. However, her responses were almost identical to those from the SIT survey. The area in which there was not agreement was group structure. "I know what's expected and what needs to be turned it," she stated, "but I'm new to this whole process here and I'm not so sure it works very well" (personal interview, March 16, 2001). The principal said much of the process was out of her hands. The group ran itself, took volunteers on a yearly basis, and was

> ... much more knowledgeable on school improvement than I am. Let's face it; I have to meet the requirements every year for school improvement. As long as the process is completed, I don't care what they come up with. I'm evaluated on how the school runs every day, not what we say it's going to be three years from now. (Personal interview, March 16, 2001)

Mrs. Gates added that she thought the group was composed of the best and brightest of the school employees. She thought parents and community members had little say on the committee. Likewise, "I have no say," she added (personal interview, March 16, 2001).

72

Oak Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Oak Middle School had 677 students in attendance and 34 certified teachers. One principal and one assistant principal represented the administrative team. Oak was experiencing a period of increasing enrollment, moving from a population of 641 in 1997 to its present number, with projections for increases over the next three to five years. Despite increasing enrollment in the school and the district, the individual building budget was decreasing. The district reported budget difficulties because an increasing amount of the general fund was being used to repair existing buildings and purchase portable units to serve the ever-expanding student population. Two teaching positions had been added, and a three-year teacher contract recently had been ratified. The principal was completing her fourth year at Oak Middle School. This administrator had followed four principals and four assistant principals who had held those positions the previous six years; she had been the most stable administrative presence at Oak in recent memory. The district superintendent had held that position for the past seven years.

At the time of this study, the Oak Middle School building needed extensive repair. The facility received a new roof in 1996 but still required several improvements. In 1996, a facilities need committee developed a plan that indicated the building needed a minimum of $11 in renovations. Voters had defeated two bond issues requesting this amount as well as additional funds to build a new middle school. The foundation allowance over the past three years ranged from $5,159 to $5,412, and the free and reduced-price lunch population declined from 8.3% to 8.1%. Total revenue generated per

pupil was $6,195, with current operating expenditures calculated at $4,585. The average teacher salary was $53,368.

The community that Oak represented was going through a change; it was fast becoming a bedroom community for three larger metropolitan areas located 15, 38, and 42 miles from its border. Average new-housing costs were in the $200,000 to $250,000 range, and the housing market was booming. New buyers generally were middle class, had dual incomes, and had children. The community was 95% white.

Student-Achievement Results

Oak Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.2. Notable observations from the data for 1996 through 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 51.8% satisfactory to 78.1% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 39.0% satisfactory to 74.0% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science dropped from 20.5% satisfactory to 15.5% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped from 76.9% satisfactory to 48.3% satisfactory.

Table 4.2: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Oak Middle School: 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	8.3%	8.2%	8.1%
Building enrollment	641	647	677
Pupil-teacher ratio	21.2	20.7	21.8
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,159	$5,412	$5,412
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$4,232	$4,585	na
Total revenue per pupil	$5,875	$6,195	na
Average teacher salary	$51,845	$53,368	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	74.2	90.2	83.7
Math—4th grade	51.8	67.2	78.1
Math—7th grade	50.0	69.6	62.9
Reading—4th grade	39.0	55.1	74.0
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	39.1	44.7	46.4
Science—8th grade	20.5	25.9	25.5
Writing—5th grade	85.7	80.3	77.6
Writing—8th grade	76.9	68.3	48.3
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

Document Review

Oak Middle School was not able to provide me with a written SIP. In fact, no

formal written plan had been available to the public for the past four years. I was given

the minutes from the March 14, 2001, SIT meeting, at which two cognitive and one

affective goal for the school were proposed, but this was the only documentation of the

fact that a SIT existed; no other minutes or agendas were available. At the time of the

study, no written school profile was available, there were no target goals for the school,

no objectives or strategies had been developed, and no budget had been established. Oak

Middle School recently had applied for NCA accreditation and was accepted into the

process in April 2001. However, all NCA application materials and data had been lost and thus were not available for me to review.

The three- to five-year SIP required for all public schools in Michigan had not been developed for the past four years at Oak Middle School. Therefore, the school did not comply with any of the state-mandated school improvement criteria. However, the school had never been designated for a program audit by the Department of Education and had never been cited for noncompliance.

Annual reports for 1996 through 1999 were provided for my review. Four goals were reported in these formal annual reports that remained the same throughout the entire period. Objectives and strategies were not defined or measured in these reports, nor was there a detailed accounting of successes or failures in meeting goals. For the past three years, the school had designed proficiencies in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies as high-priority goals, and reported scores did show academic gain. Gender-equity problems in these areas also showed improvement. The annual reports gave no evidence of new goals' having been developed for at least four years. Parent conference participation data had not been recorded.

SIT Observations

My first opportunity to observe Oak Middle School's SIT at the school site was postponed because no one showed up. A second date was set, and I arrived early for the scheduled 12:30 p.m. meeting. The meeting began at 1:00, with 28 participants in attendance. The assistant principal opened the meeting and explained that the principal had been called away to central office. "I'm really not sure what I'm supposed to be doing here," he began, "but let's get started" (SIT observation, April 11, 2001). Only teachers were present at the meeting, and there appeared to be no chairperson. No

agenda was distributed or followed. A math teacher stated the main emphasis of the meeting: It was to be a review of student-achievement results in math, social studies, science, language arts, and fine arts. One teacher suggested that faculty members meet in subject-area subgroups and compare information. This suggestion was agreed to by consensus. The subgroups formed and shared information for approximately 30 minutes.

I was allowed to move from group to group and observe. All groups shared detailed teacher grading results (A to E) and failure rates. No other discussions on any other topics were recorded or observed. The same math teacher then suggested that the groups write up their observations and present them at the next faculty meeting. Again, the group agreed by informal consensus, and the meeting ended at 2:05 p.m. with members either rising to leave or sitting in small groups discussing matters informally. No one interacted with me after the meeting. I did ask the assistant principal for copies of the groups' written observations, and he assured me that I would receive them. However, three subsequent requests over the next two months did not produce the reports. In June, the assistant principal informed me that the reports had been completed and shared, but they had been lost.

My observations of this group led me to conclude that meetings were not formal or regularly scheduled. During the meeting, group members indicated that attendance was voluntary, and no one was formally designated a team member. No one could provide a list of SIT officers.

Survey Results

Fourteen surveys were sent to Oak Middle School SIT members, and all of them were returned. I charted and recorded the responses, following the same procedures explained earlier.
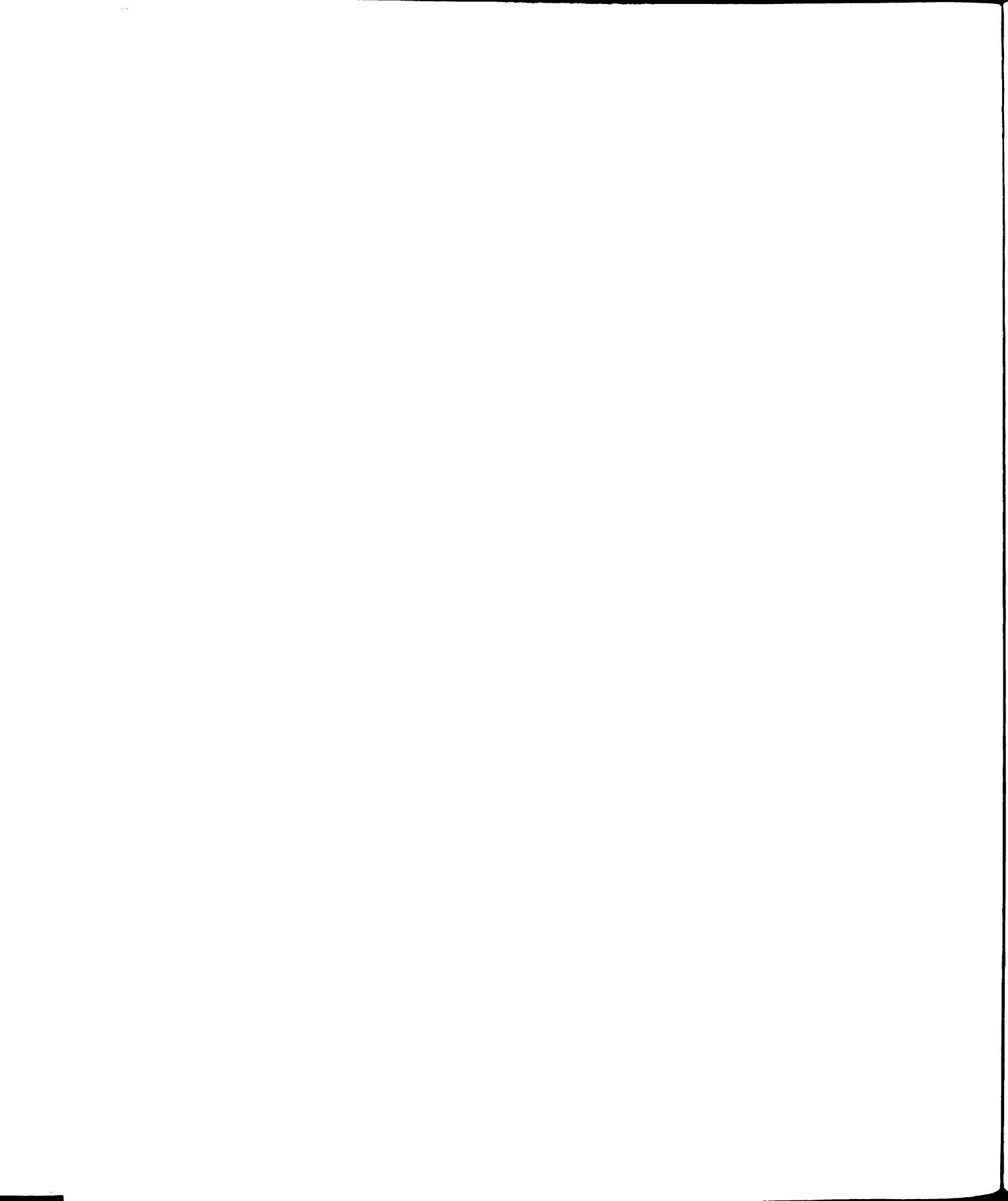
Respondents assessed ample effort, as it related to the group, as relatively low. In the area of group structure, a majority of respondents were not sure about or disagreed with the idea that the SIT work was meaningful, and most did not believe that the SIT was effective in designing or implementing effective strategies. Responses indicated that team members' ability to work well together was suspect, they were not motivated to do well, and overall the SIT was not very important in the school. One respondent wrote, "It's really a waste of time, this school improvement hoop-jump; we all know that the superintendent and the central office set the goals for this school district. Our job is to meet them, and that means high MEAP scores and student achievement." More than two-thirds of the group indicated that the SIT did not complete tasks, put less than ample effort into doing their work, and overall were not very motivationally charged. Yet, one respondent wrote, "SIT goals and objectives need to be kept more in the spotlight as a focus; [it] needs more visibility, drive, and energy."

The survey responses from Oak Middle School were not definitive regarding ample effort in organizational commitment or coaching and consulting. Responses reflected confusion and in some cases opposing opinions. For instance, respondents asserted that SIT members had high interpersonal skills, yet they reported that the team could not work through conflict. "I feel our SIT is ineffective," wrote one member; "I can think of few initiatives brought forth from the SIT." Respondents were not sure about or said there was no reward for being a team member, yet they indicated that group rewards might be present. Two-thirds of respondents agreed that no time was provided for building team commitment or team leadership. All respondents reported that they were not sure about or disagreed with the idea that individual rewards motivated them.

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group composition, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. Respondents indicated they were not very clear on the task and purpose of the SIT. "At our school, the school improvement process is a charade," one wrote. "Don't get me wrong," that respondent added, "we are a professional staff that does not trust the central administration. The administration sets the goals, and they are all achievement driven. Students have to score well and that's what we need to focus on. Meaningless meetings waste our time." Most respondents said that, individually, they were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals, but they did not believe the group as a whole was skilled. The majority of the group reported that the SIT did not represent all stakeholders in the school. One member wrote, "I was approached by my principle [sic] for the position; [it] felt like an obligation."

The respondents unanimously reported that training was not a high priority for their school district; in fact, no training of any type was reported, including training for group effectiveness. Initial responses indicated that the team did not work well together. The majority of respondents reported that only a few members made all the decisions, and two-thirds did not believe they were valued or had equal influence with other members. "I strongly believe that school improvement could be a wonderful tool to change the environment of the school in a meaningful way," a respondent wrote, and continued, "I have served on two different teams at two schools where there was marked improvement; however, school improvement at my present school is nothing more than a paper chase."

The last area explored in the survey was task-appropriate performance strategies as they related to group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting. The majority of team members indicated that meetings were not held regularly, that formal procedures such as agendas were rarely used, and that no budget or budget control was evident. "Our team rarely meets, and its leadership and membership changes regularly," one respondent wrote. Respondents also indicated that the SIT had little or no access to data and forecasts, and did little in regard to interpreting the information in developing future strategies or goals. The group was undecided as to whether data provided by the district's administration left room for interpretation.

A common theme emerged as a majority of respondents said they were not sure whether any strategies developed by the team were effective. One respondent wrote, "Our SIT . . . has not met regularly for a few years. I feel we are a group that is together to fulfill a requirement rather than a valuable vehicle for change." Team members reported that they received little or no assistance in avoiding failed strategies, developing new strategies, developing effective working conditions, or carrying out day-to-day activities at the school. Two-thirds of the respondents said that the SIT could not develop effective strategies for identified goals.

Principal Interview

Ms. Foote had been principal of Oak Middle School for four years. She had come to the job with experience as a teacher and also as a central office administrator. This was her first assignment as a building-level administrator. We were able to talk for two hours after she returned from her central office meeting. Most of Ms. Foote's responses differed from SIT members' answers to the survey.

In the area of ample effort, Ms. Foote indicated that SIT work was meaningful to her and was effective at the school. She said the team was dedicated to completing its tasks, worked together well, and were committed and dedicated to each other. She noted,

> Our teachers become frustrated because they feel they have no say in the goals of our school. We have many needs, but the central office has placed student achievement as the highest need. Therefore, we assess, design instruction to meet the gaps, and move forward. Perhaps our teachers feel out of the loop, but our students do succeed. (Personal interview, April 11, 2001)

This principal said she accepted a high level of responsibility for the school improvement process and was primarily held accountable for the team's success. Ms. Foote described the group's structure as basically not under her control. "I can require no one to attend or be a member," she stated. "I am at the mercy of whoever shows up. Parents and community members rarely stay very long, and we never see them after a few meetings" (personal interview, April 11, 2001). She claimed that survey respondents were wrong in saying that SIT meetings were not being held regularly and that no training was taking place. "Perhaps teachers don't realize that everyone is really on the team and every faculty meeting is a SIT meeting," she stated. "We also meet one-half day every other Wednesday for staff development. That is development for what we assess we need based on student achievement" (personal interview, April 11, 2001).

Ms. Foote's responses corresponded with the survey results when she discussed sufficient knowledge and skill level among SIT members. She asserted, "All our teachers know what good teaching is all about. They assess student achievement and teach to the skills that are missing. Sometimes I think all this planning and writing and meeting takes away from what they should really be doing" (personal interview, April 11, 2001). She was also in agreement with survey respondents when queried about training and professional development. Noting that she had no budget for professional development

or school improvement in her individual building, she discussed the district's commitment to school improvement. "We can plan all we want," she stated, "but what really counts is what the district wants, and that is where we spend our time, meeting the goals of the district. All training is district driven, and we don't train on our own" (personal interview, April 11, 2001).

Ms. Foote seemed confident that task-appropriate performance strategies designed by central office for all district teachers were appropriate. She informed me that she was more interested in results than in the school improvement process:

> We try to tailor our needs to what the district offers our teachers. I would guess that you did not find a very organized team here. But I will bet that we will be one of the higher performing schools that you look at for your research project. We don't waste time talking about improvement. We do it. And then we send the state what it needs. (Personal interview, April 11, 2001)

Elm Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Elm Middle School had 346 students in attendance and 22 certified teachers. Elm was a fairly new school, having been built and occupied in 1999 after vacating a turn-of-the-century converted high school building. The administrative team comprised one principal and an assistant principal. Elm was going through a period of slightly increasing enrollment, moving from a population of 328 in 1997 to its present number. Projections for continued increase over the next three to five years were suspect, though, because a neighboring school district had already enrolled several Elm Middle School students through a schools-of-choice program. The district reported budget difficulties because increasing numbers of new students chose to attend schools in the neighboring district.

The principal was ending his eighth year at Elm Middle School and had announced that he was retiring after the 2002 school year. The district superintendent had been in place for the past 11 months. Elm Middle School had been actively participating in the school improvement process for 12 years, and the district was recognized throughout the county as being in the forefront of county districts using the school improvement process to focus on student achievement. This was the first middle school in the county to become NCA accredited.

The foundation allowance over the past three years had ranged from $5,278 to $5,462, and the free and reduced-price lunch population had increased from 19.8% to 22.3%. Total revenue generated per pupil equaled $6,382, with current operating expenditures calculated at $4,663. The average teacher salary was $63,012.

The community that Elm represented was fairly stable, but there were indications that it was becoming a bedroom community for two large metropolitan areas located 18 and 21 miles from its border. Average new-housing costs were in the $120,000 to $150,000 range, and current-housing prices reflected an increase to keep pace. New buyers generally were middle class. The community was 96% white.

Student-Achievement Results

Elm Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.3. Notable observations from the data for 1996 through 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 45.0% satisfactory to 56.9% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 26.2% satisfactory to 39.2% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose from 21.0% satisfactory to 21.7% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped from 87.3% satisfactory to 71.7% satisfactory.

Table 4.3: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Elm Middle School: 1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	19.8%	23.1%	22.3%
Building enrollment	328	325	346
Pupil-teacher ratio	21.4	25.0	22.5
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,278	$5,462	$5,462
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$4,426	$4,663	na
Total revenue per pupil	$6,040	$6,382	na
Average teacher salary	$45,812	$63,012	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	56.1	70.9	78.8
Math—4th grade	45.0	56.1	56.9
Math—7th grade	40.3	46.1	63.6
Reading—4th grade	26.2	45.2	39.2
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	28.8	35.6	33.8
Science—8th grade	21.0	19.4	21.7
Writing—5th grade	60.5	71.0	39.4
Writing—8th grade	87.3	71.9	71.7
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

Document Review

Elm Middle School provided me with a written NCA SIP for the current year, as well as annual reports for the past three years. Some minutes and agendas for SIT meetings were made available at the school site for review. Elm Middle School had been involved in a formal school improvement process for 12 years and was also NCA

accredited. The school had a $1,000 school improvement budget. The SIT set three

goals, two cognitive and one affective, for the 2000-01 school year. Elm had a published

school profile available and target goals identified. No objectives or strategies had yet

been developed for the new cycle of school improvement that was just beginning.

Objectives and strategies were to be developed the following year, as required by NCA.

Elm was on schedule with this new cycle of school improvement. The school had

designated proficiencies in communication, problem solving, and critical thinking as

high-priority goals. The school's parent conference participation rate was reported to be

48%.

SIT Observations

The SIT at Elm Middle School was composed entirely of the NCA steering

committee. The steering committee was made up of three subcommittees, each devoted

to a specific target goal set for the school. The whole steering committee met

approximately three times a year, but the target-goal committees met as many as seven or

eight times a year. I was not able to observe a meeting of the entire group because two

scheduled meetings were cancelled. However, I did observe a meeting of a target-goal

group. Although all target-goal groups operated independently of one another, the

principal assured me that the formats of their meetings were essentially the same. All

members of the steering committee were faculty members of the school. No parents,

community members, or students were included.

I arrived approximately one-half hour before the target-goal committee was to

meet. All meetings were held after school and were convened when the group thought it

was necessary to meet. No agenda was provided, and minutes were not published. The

meeting I observed took place in a classroom, and participants used student desks. The

target-goal chairperson kept records. It was reported that these minutes would be combined with the other target-goal committee records when the steering committee convened to complete the SIP.

The steering committee chair attended the meeting as a special guest. She presented a report on a conference she recently had attended and shared information with the group concerning study skills, a subject that seemed important to this group. She also shared information on an adopt-a-student program, cross-age tutoring, block scheduling, homework programs, social probation contracts, professional reading, after-school busing, additional paraprofessionals, child-study-team initiatives, and budgeting. The report lasted about 45 minutes, and no discussion took place.

The remaining 15 minutes of the meeting were led by the target-goal chair, the purpose being to develop at least two more objectives for their problem-solving and critical-thinking goal. The conversation was focused on developing an objective that would be data driven. After 15 minutes of discussion, a participant suggested, "At our next meeting we will need to look at the final objectives and also some data. We need to do this very soon" (SIT observation, March 21, 2001). The meeting adjourned with no objectives identified.

My observation of this group led me to conclude that meetings were not formal, although they were regularly scheduled. Group members indicated that attendance was voluntary but that everyone listed as a member was a formal team member. Seven of the 12 subcommittee members attended the meeting I observed. There was no discussion of student achievement or testing strategies. The meeting was devoted solely to providing reports and accomplishing the paperwork tasks required by NCA and the state of Michigan.

<u>Survey Results</u>

Twenty-two surveys were sent to Elm Middle School SIT members, and 12 were returned. The respondents assessed ample effort in the group as very high. In the area of group structure, nearly all respondents agreed that the SIT work was meaningful, and all stated that the SIT was effective in designing or implementing effective strategies. Responses indicated that the team's ability to work well together was highly valued, team members were motivated to do well, and overall the SIT was very important in the school. Nearly all of the respondents reported that the group completed tasks, gave ample effort to complete their work, and were motivationally charged. However, one respondent wrote, "NCA and school improvement are highly valued, but finances and professional development are not here this year. We have to get better or else the kids will still keep leaving."

The survey responses were definitive in the areas of organizational commitment and coaching and consulting. Respondents agreed strongly that SIT members had high interpersonal skills and that the team could work through conflict. "I feel our SIT is very effective," one member wrote. "Some members have poor attendance, but we're proud of the initiatives brought forth from the SIT." Respondents were sure there were rewards for being a team member but indicated that neither group nor individual rewards were incentives to do better. Two-thirds of respondents agreed that little or no time was provided for building team commitment or team leadership. One commented, "This is the first year that we have not had time due to budget cuts for professional development. In the past we had one-half day a month."

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group composition, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate

weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. Respondents reported that they were not very clear on the task and purpose of the SIT. Nearly all of them indicated that, individually, they were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals; also, they believed that the group as a whole was skilled. Most respondents reported that the SIT represented all stakeholders in the school, even though the only members were teachers. Respondents unanimously reported that training was not a high priority for their school district; in fact, they indicated no training of any type, including training for group effectiveness. Responses indicated that team members worked well together and that decisions were made equally.

The last area explored in the survey was task-appropriate performance strategies as they related to group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting. The majority of respondents indicated that meetings were held regularly, formal procedures such as agendas were used, and the budget and budget control were limited significantly that year. "Funds are available for training and conferences, but it is usually used by the NCA chair or committee chairs," one respondent reported. Respondents indicated that the SIT had full access to data and forecasts, and interpreted the data for future strategy and goal development. All respondents reported that data provided by the district's administration allowed for full SIT interpretation. Further, respondents indicated that they were fairly sure that strategies developed by the team were effective. Team members also indicated that they received assistance in avoiding failed strategies, developing new strategies, developing effective working conditions, and carrying out day-to-day activities at the school. All respondents reported that the SIT could develop effective strategies for achieving identified goals.

Principal Interview

Mr. Earl had been principal of Elm Middle School for eight years. He had had 20 years of teaching experience and had been hired in the district as an experienced administrator. We were able to talk for an hour and a half, two weeks before I observed Elm's SIT meeting but after all respondents had completed the survey.

Mr. Earl began the interview by admitting that he was not at all clear about the task of the SIT. "I have been involved with school improvement for many years," he said. "It is required and we set goals and change things at the school, and it's very important and meaningful to me, but most times I'm confused as to how it causes any results" (personal interview, March 7, 2001).

In the areas of ample effort and sufficient knowledge and skill, Mr. Earl's responses were similar to those of the surveyed SIT members. Although he was confident in his responses dealing with motivated members, meaningfulness of the tasks, and organizational commitment, he was less positive in his responses regarding task-appropriate performance. For instance, Mr. Earl could not relate specific examples of increased student achievement but insisted that 85% of the work completed by the SIT thus far had resulted in some form of increased student achievement. He cited two examples of creative ideas that the group had implemented. Both ideas involved changes in the structure of faculty's day. Staff meetings were moved to the morning to provide more time in the afternoon for school improvement planning, and department meetings were lengthened but fewer were held during the year. When asked how these initiatives increased student achievement, Mr. Earl responded, "Teachers are very motivated, interested, and devoted to classroom tasks now. Student achievement must be increasing."

Although he was proud of his school, students, and SIT, Mr. Earl was concerned that he was operating with a budget of only $1,000. He also voiced frustration at the lack of time for meetings and the fact that virtually no training was taking place: "We don't have time for training, and training in how to work as a group is a low priority. We barely have time to complete the paperwork required for NCA accreditation and the required forms we need to send to the state. Where is there any time to implement programs?" (personal interview, March 7, 2001). He confirmed that any training that did take place usually took the form of an NCA in-service session designed to complete the required tasks and reporting necessary for end-of-year reviews.

Poplar Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Poplar Middle School had 475 students in attendance and 28 certified teachers. The administrative team comprised one principal and an assistant principal. Poplar had been experiencing a period of declining enrollment, moving from a population of 501 in 1997 to its present number, with continued projections of loss over the next three years. However, enrollment decline was slowing due to a district schools-of-choice initiative adopted three years earlier. Seventy-six students in the building were from outside the district. For the most part, they had transferred to Poplar because their families were dissatisfied with their home school district.

Poplar Middle School was in need of extensive repair. Several faculty were shared with both the high school and elementary schools, and some classrooms were housed in areas that had been converted from nonclassroom space. School programs were directly dependent on a teacher's availability to be scheduled between two or more

buildings. The foundation allowance over the past three years had ranged from $5,361 to $5,515, and the free and reduced-price lunch population had declined from a high of 22.5% to the current 20.7%. Total revenue generated per pupil was $6,282, with current operating expenditures calculated at $3,358. The average teacher salary was $42,235.

The community that Poplar represented was relatively stable, reflecting little or no change for the past five years. Average housing costs were constant, and current-housing prices reflected a nominal increase over the past three years. The community was 97% white.

Student-Achievement Results

Poplar Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.4. Notable observations from the data for 1996 to 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 63.9% satisfactory to 79.0% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 43.2% satisfactory to 63.6% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose from 26.5% satisfactory to 38.4% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped from 78.2% satisfactory to 71.1% satisfactory.

Document Review

Poplar Middle School maintained and provided detailed documentation of the school's past planning and progress. I reviewed annual reports for the past three years,

three SIPs, a profile of the school and community, and their most recent NCA yearly

report. No minutes or agendas for SIT meetings were available.

Table 4.4: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Poplar Middle School:
1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	22.5%	22.1%	20.7%
Building enrollment	501	492	475
Pupil-teacher ratio	25.2	24.6	23.3
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,361	$5,515	na
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$3,358	na	na
Total revenue per pupil	$5,818	$6,282	na
Average teacher salary	$44,391	$42,235	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	62.8	87.5	86.5
Math—4th grade	63.9	77.2	79.0
Math—7th grade	60.3	65.6	73.7
Reading—4th grade	43.2	57.2	63.6
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	53.8	54.9	42.6
Science—8th grade	26.5	36.0	38.4
Writing—5th grade	93.9	92.3	64.7
Writing—8th grade	78.2	64.7	71.1
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

The three- to five-year SIP for the past three years complied with all of the state-

mandated criteria. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured. A

detailed accounting of the successes and failures of initiatives pursued by the SIT also

was available. The school had designated two main goals for the preceding four years.

Goal one was to align all curriculum with the state benchmarks and standards, and goal

two was to develop an assessment plan and procedure that would drive instruction, to be

measured by attainment of the benchmarks and standards. Parent conference participation had remained about the same for three years, ranging from 52% to 53%.

SIT Observations

No SIT observations were possible because no formal SIT, as defined by the state of Michigan or the current literature, existed or met regularly at Poplar Middle School. This fact became apparent to me after I had worked with the school for approximately four months. Three visits to observe the team were cancelled before the principal explained that no formal team existed. He and the school viewed the entire faculty as the team, and he declared there was no need to hold formal meetings to discuss what was believed to be an organizational norm at Poplar. An NCA steering committee did exist, though. It had nine members and met twice a year to review the reports that had to be submitted annually. The principal was the primary writer of these reports. The NCA steering committee acted as a clearinghouse for recording and publishing results, and initiatives were implemented through faculty consensus. Several staff committees met throughout the year, and information as to what had or had not been accomplished was shared at faculty meetings and through internal bulletins. The principal commented, "This in no way means that school improvement is not taking place at Poplar Middle School. . . . No decisions in this school are made without data, and that data, gained through proper assessment, drives our instruction" (personal interview, March 14, 2001).

A strong central administrative mandate was apparent in this district. Although no formal team was observed, from information contained in published documents I inferred that goals were set at the district level. In turn, buildings set goals that met the district goals. All goals were based on data from state assessments, and all strategies had to have a research base embedded in their development. No activities, in-service

93

opportunities, material purchases, or professional development were allowed unless a link could be established between the goals and the planned initiative.

Survey Results

As explained earlier, the school viewed its nine-member NCA steering committee as the formal SIT. Thus, I provided nine surveys to the Spruce Middle School SIT members and five were returned. The respondents assessed ample effort as it related to group structure as high. Respondents reported that they were a motivationally charged group, worked well together, and were effective in designing and implementing strategies for school improvement. All respondents indicated that work on the team was meaningful and important to the school. They also reported that the group, rather than individuals, was held accountable for completed tasks. However, respondents were not in agreement about whether tangible and intangible rewards were present. Regardless, the majority responded that rewards for the group and for individuals had little effect on their performance or desire to do well. Most respondents indicated that the SIT was sufficiently staffed, could work together to reach consensus, and received adequate assistance from leaders to work as a group.

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group composition, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. All respondents were confident that members of the SIT had the knowledge and skill as well as ample opportunities to learn to be effective. The majority reported that training was provided when needed and at the team's request. However, most also said that administrators determined training. Training was reported to be a high priority for the district, and the SIT was trained often to facilitate task completion. Although all respondents indicated

that all members of the SIT were valued, half thought that the leadership favored some members over others and that not all members shared responsibility equally.

The last area explored in the survey was task-appropriate performance strategies. Respondents indicated that meetings were held regularly, the SIT leadership coordinated deadlines, and members had ample opportunity to share their expertise. The majority of respondents reported they had no input into how the budget was spent or whether a budget existed. Respondents indicated that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, determined how the data were interpreted, and had full authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on that information, as long as district goals and objectives were met. Respondents indicated no pressure from administrators or the district to implement ideas that had originated outside the group. "We are charged to be responsible educators and come up with effective strategies to meet the goals of the district and central office," one respondent wrote. "In addition," that respondent added, "we know the rule is this: Use proper assessment, study the data, use the data to drive instruction, and keep student achievement as the focal point of our work. What we do to reach the goal is our business. The goal is determined by the district." Respondents clearly indicated that they were sure the plans and strategies they developed were effective. Respondents thought they received adequate assistance and resources to complete the process of school improvement as well as to carry out the day-to-day operations of the school.

Principal Interview

Mr. James had been principal of Poplar Middle School for nine years. During the interview, he stated that he was clear about the purpose and the task of the SIT. He stated that the SIT's purpose was to increase student achievement,

... but unfortunately, it's not like the old days. We used to try things to help students; now all we do is complete paperwork. The paperwork is not enjoyable, but we produce it and keep trying other things that work. So I guess the purpose now is to produce reports and keep our accreditation. That would be for the politicians, but in our district we still know that student achievement is always and will always remain the goal. (Personal interview, March 24, 2001)

Mr. James explained that, on paper, he reported the required information and named a formalized SIT, which was his NCA steering committee. However, he said the SIT was really the whole staff, led by the steering committee, responding to district goals.

Poplar was in year three of the five-year NCA plan, so no new goals had been developed for the following year, and objectives and strategies were not formally completed or submitted. Mr. James explained, "We can do whatever we want at the building level as long as it doesn't interfere with the district's objectives of aligning our curriculum with the standards and benchmarks and having assessment drive instruction. We are never without goals, objectives, and strategies" (personal interview, March 14, 2001).

Mr. James reported that he thought his staff tolerated the school improvement process as required by the state. He said his steering committee met with resistance when trying to implement the process to complete the required paperwork. According to him, training in the required process was provided twice a year. An outside consultant had been hired the previous year to work with staff as they attempted to comply with all state mandates. This consultant was funded through special requests because no formal NCA or SIT budget had been established for the school.

When asked about accountability, Mr. James said that the only one held accountable in his district was the principal of the building being assessed. Membership on the SIT was voluntary. No stipends or budget was provided for members. The

committee work, research, and planning were completed as extra duties, and, in the case

of NCA, as an edict from central office. Mr. James explained,

> We do what is necessary here because the curriculum is determined centrally and the goals are given to us. We have many out-of-district students in attendance, our scores are rising, and we stay within our budget. We focus on student achievement as a goal and not the school improvement process. We believe in school improvement the way we do it, not necessarily the way the state mandates. I think our indicators for success demonstrate that our way is better. (Personal interview, March 14, 2001)

Maple Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Maple Middle School had 776 students in

attendance and 38 certified teachers. The administrative team comprised one principal

and an assistant principal. Maple was in the midst of increasing enrollment and shared

students with another middle school, Willow Middle School, in the district. Excess

enrollment was being absorbed by Willow Middle School as Maple waited for a new

building to be built, which it would occupy in fall 2003. Teaching positions had to be

added every year in response to the growth that was occurring.

Maple's current principal had been transferred to the building in December 1999

and had been there only a year when I began gathering data. He had been transferred

from an elementary school position in the district mid-year, when the middle school

position was vacated. Maple Middle School was in a transition period, with a new

principal and a planned physical move of its operations in 18 months. The foundation

allowance over the past three years had ranged from $5,338 to $5,492, and the free and

reduced-price lunch population had declined from a high of 9.5% to the current 7.6%.

Total revenue generated per pupil was $6,070, and current operating expenditures were

calculated at $3,759. The average teacher salary was $47,727.

The community that Maple represented also was going through a change, as it was quickly moving from a rural to a bedroom community for several larger metropolitan areas located within 45 minutes of its border. Average new-housing costs were in the $120,000 to $150,000 range (the lowest in the county), and several new manufactured-home communities had been or were being built. New buyers generally were first-time homeowners, had school-age children, and were employed in the metropolitan areas bordering the district. The community was 97% white.

Student-Achievement Results

Maple Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.5. Notable observations from the data for 1996 to 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 66.5% satisfactory to 71.6% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 49.1% satisfactory to 65.3% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose from 19.8% satisfactory to 26.9% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing rose from 76.1% satisfactory to 80.1% satisfactory.

Document Review

Maple Middle School maintained and provided detailed documentation of the school's past planning and progress. Annual reports for the past three years, SIPs for those years, and the school's most recent NCA accreditation materials were made

available to me. The three- to five-year SIP for the past three years complied with all of

the state-mandated criteria. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured.

A detailed accounting of the successes and failures of the initiatives also was included.

The school had designated communications, global implications of the social sciences,

and science as high-priority goals for the past three years, and the reported scores

reflected some gains in student achievement. However, gender-equity problems still

existed in many academic areas. Parent conference participation was 65%.

Table 4.5: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Maple Middle School:
          1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	9.5%	9.6%	7.6%
Building enrollment	788	819	776
Pupil-teacher ratio	26.3	23.5	22.7
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,338	$5,492	$5,492
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$3,682	$3,759	na
Total revenue per pupil	$5,921	$6,070	na
Average teacher salary	$51,782	$47,727	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	78.3	80.7	77.1
Math—4th grade	66.5	73.0	71.6
Math—7th grade	72.4	75.0	70.2
Reading—4th grade	49.1	63.3	65.3
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	36.1	43.5	39.3
Science—8th grade	19.8	22.2	26.9
Writing—5th grade	87.3	77.7	65.9
Writing—8th grade	76.1	71.9	80.2
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

<u>SIT Observations</u>

I had an opportunity to observe a SIT meeting at the school site. The meeting was a regularly scheduled one that began after school. An agenda was handed out to all attendees. Teachers were invited to attend because the SIT (which was also the NCA steering committee) was briefing the school on the upcoming goals visit by the regional NCA oversight committee. The review team representing NCA would be visiting in two weeks and would be reviewing the school's completed profile and planned target goals. Forty-one people attended the meeting. The formal SIT team consisted of 10 members, but all staff were expected to sit on a target-goal team.

The building principal facilitated this joint SIT meeting. He opened the meeting by referring to a published agenda. First, the group viewed a 12-minute video concerning the school improvement process. This was followed by reviews of the NCA school improvement timeline, the school profile, and the correct criteria to use and follow when creating effective goals. The principal spoke to the group and used handouts to illustrate his points. He announced each target goal and charged the group to come up with ideas for proper assessments. No questions were asked, and no discussion took place.

The identified target goals dealt with communications, global implications of the social sciences, and science. Specifically, the goals were for all students to improve their written communication skills across the curriculum. Further, all students would learn and apply core democratic values across the curriculum. Also, all students would improve their understanding and application of scientific knowledge across the curriculum.

The main group broke into subgroups defined by the target-area goal they were developing. The groups met primarily to schedule a time to complete the tasks assigned during the main meeting. Those tasks included specifying the written communication

skills students would improve, the core democratic values students would learn, and the scientific knowledge students would understand and apply. Above all else, the principal challenged the participants to design measurements for these soon-to-be criteria. He stated, "These assessments will be used to drive future instruction and are the key to all the work we want to accomplish here, folks" (SIT observation notes, April 10, 2001). The meeting adjourned 80 minutes after it had started.

Survey Results

Ten surveys were provided to Maple Middle School SIT members and nine were returned. Assessment of ample effort in the group as it pertained to group structure resulted in mixed responses. Overall, the group indicated that the work was meaningful, was very important to the school, and that, individually, respondents were motivated to do well. One respondent wrote, "I am very familiar with the process and have been a member at a previous school. I'm not so sure about the other members." However, the majority of respondents were not sure whether the SIT worked well together, gave ample effort as a group, or was motivated to do well. Respondents generally were unsure about commitment to the group and tasks or reported that it was low. "This is a tremendously important process and it needs to be given the appropriate 'focusing, researching and analyzing' time," one respondent wrote. Respondents did not agree as to whether the group or individuals were primarily held accountable for the SIT's performance. They indicated that rewards were not prime motivators for the work completed and were unsure whether any rewards even existed. Virtually all respondents indicated that they personally had adequate interpersonal skills to work with a group, and that team members were able to work through conflict as a group, devoted time to building commitment within the team, and had leaders who assisted the group in working as a team.

101

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group structure, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. Respondents reported that they were very clear on the task and purpose of the SIT. Most said that the SIT was large enough to complete its tasks and that the members were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals. The group did not agree that the SIT represented all stakeholders of the school.

Respondents indicated confidence in their knowledge and skill level and the ability to learn. However, half of them reported that they did not believe that the team as a whole possessed these attributes. "I do not know how to evaluate the SIT at our school," wrote one respondent; "it is so new for me and has only had a couple of meetings this year." Responses also indicated that training was not a high priority for the team or the organization they represented. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that assistance and training were not provided on a regular basis and that administrators generally determined the training that was provided. SIT members said that all members were valued, but there was no consensus about who made most of the decisions, whether participation was equal, or whether leaders gave undue weighting to certain individuals.

The last area explored was task-appropriate performance strategies. Respondents indicated that meetings were held regularly, but half responded that sharing was not done on a regular basis. The group also indicated that the leadership assisted in setting deadlines and decrees. The majority reported that they had no say in how the budget was spent or managed. Only half of the respondents indicated that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, determined how the data were interpreted, and had full authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on that information. Two-thirds of

the respondents also indicated that they were in agreement with or were unsure about whether data provided by administration left room for SIT interpretation. "We have a very strong and able curriculum department in this school district," one respondent wrote. "We trust that their forecasts, assessments, and plans are valid, and we would be foolish to make up our own plans and not follow their suggestions."

Finally, Maple SIT members responded overwhelmingly that task-appropriate strategies designed by the group for the school's goals and objectives were effective. However, respondents generally were unsure about whether the team received organizational assistance in avoiding flawed strategies and developing new ways to work, or did not think this occurred. One respondent wrote, "My big concern is that we are provided with the time and materials (research based) to enable us to work on and reach our goals."

Principal Interview

Mr. Stelmack had been a middle-level teacher in a progressive middle school and then an assistant principal of a middle school before serving as an elementary school principal for several years. This was his first assignment as a middle school principal; he succeeded a principal who had been in the position for three years. Mr. Stelmack had been in this current assignment for approximately 16 months.

The principal's responses were similar to those of SIT members in virtually all areas except organizational commitment to the task and budget. He explained that school improvement was highly valued at the district administrative and board levels and that a significant budget had been designated to the process. "Our SIT just doesn't recognize that thousands of dollars are devoted to their training every year on district initiatives designed to increase student achievement. I fear they see no connection with the building

103

efforts and the district efforts" (personal interview, June 7, 2001). The school board had developed a comprehensive district SIP based on the needs of the individual buildings and had also committed to the goal of having all nine schools in the district be NCA accredited.

Mr. Stelmack explained, "We have ample assistance and budget for school improvement work, but I must apply to the assistant superintendent for funds and resources for our building initiatives. If the initiative matches the district's plan, then we receive them" (personal interview, June 7, 2001). He clarified further that his SIT had the authority and autonomy to develop goals, objectives, and strategies, but they had to match state and NCA requirements and be based on documented need as indicated by district research results. Only cognitive goals dealing with student achievement were acceptable to the district leadership. Affective goals were allowed but not encouraged.

Mr. Stelmack expressed frustration as well as satisfaction with the school improvement process. He began,

> We want to be more invested in assessment-driven instruction but are hindered because of lack of resources. We never have enough money, community or parent help, and unfortunately, staff view this process as an extra job and not a task that can help their job become easier and more fulfilling. Even though the process makes sense, we are frustrated that only some progress can be measured through student achievement results. I feel the breakdown occurs because we are not able as a team to communicate information to the staff in an effective way so that resources developed can be focused on students. I fear that all we have done is teach students how to become better test takers, and now that they've learned these skills they show better results. (Personal interview, June 7, 2001)

The principal concluded the interview by explaining that school improvement was very important to him and that he believed in the process. He cited research and his opinion as to how the process helped the school draw together as one community. However, he added, "We try to help all groups understand each other's perspectives, but this is nearly impossible. So we complete the paperwork, meet the published guidelines,

and move on to another year, hoping student achievement will get better. And it does"
(personal interview, June 7, 2001).

Willow Middle School

Demographics

At the end of the 1999 school year, Willow Middle School had 888 students in
attendance and 40 certified teachers. The administrative team comprised one principal
and an assistant principal. Willow was in the midst of increasing enrollment and shared
students with another middle school in the district, Maple Middle School. Willow
Middle School was absorbing excess enrollment in the district as it waited for a new
building to be built and occupied by the Maple Middle School student population. The
new school was scheduled for completion in fall 2003. Two teaching positions were
added at Willow that year.

Willow's principal had been in the position for the past five years, having held a
central office position before that. The foundation allowance over the past three years
had ranged from $5,338 to $5,492. The free and reduced-price lunch population had
declined from a high of 9.9% to the current 8.5%. Total revenue generated per pupil
equaled $6,070, with current operating expenditures calculated at $3,895. The average
teacher salary was $50,475.

The community that Willow represented was going through the same changes as
those described for Maple Middle School because both schools were in the same school
district. Therefore, the demographic description for Maple was the same as that for
Willow.

Student-Achievement Results

Willow Middle School's student-achievement results, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP, are detailed in Table 4.6. Notable observations from the data for 1999 through 1999 include:

1. Achievement in 7th-grade math rose from 57.1% satisfactory to 77.1% satisfactory.

2. Achievement in 7th-grade reading rose from 41.5% satisfactory to 77.1% satisfactory.

3. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose from 25.6% satisfactory to 35.0% satisfactory.

4. Achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped from 91.2% satisfactory to 76.8% satisfactory.

Document Review

Willow Middle School maintained and provided detailed documentation on the school's past planning and progress. Annual reports for the past three years, three SIPs, and the school's most recent NCA accreditation materials were made available to me.

The three- to five-year SIP for the past three years met all of the state-mandated criteria. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured. A detailed accounting of the successes and failures of the initiatives also was included. The school had designated improvements in social studies, science, math, and student connectivity to the school as high-priority goals for the past three years, and reported scores showed some gains in these areas. Gender-equity problems still existed in several academic areas. Parent conference participation was 71%.

Table 4.6: Enrollment, financial, and MEAP statistics for Willow Middle School:
1996-97, 1997-98, and 1998-99.

Descriptor	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Free & reduced-price lunch	9.9%	10.5%	8.5%
Building enrollment	811	825	888
Pupil-teacher ratio	23.9	23.2	23.2
Financial data			
Foundation allowance per pupil	$5,338	$5,492	$5,492
Current operating expenditures per pupil	$3,887	$3,895	na
Total revenue per pupil	$5,921	$6,070	na
Average teacher salary	$51,609	$50,475	na
MEAP results (% satisfactory)			
Grades 4 & 7	78.3	80.7	77.1
Math—4th grade	57.1	70.9	72.8
Math—7th grade	72.4	75.0	70.2
Reading—4th grade	41.5	68.1	77.1
Reading—7th grade			
Grades 5 & 8			
Science—5th grade	36.1	43.5	39.3
Science—8th grade	25.6	32.3	35.0
Writing—5th grade	87.3	77.7	65.9
Writing—8th grade	91.2	84.5	76.8
Accreditation status	M-I	M-I	M-I

SIT Observations

I had the opportunity to observe a SIT meeting at the school site. The meeting

was a regularly scheduled one that began after school. An agenda was handed out to all

attendees. The meeting was mandatory because the SIT comprised the entire faculty.

Although there was an NCA steering committee that represented itself as the formal SIT

of Willow Middle School, the organization had decided that the faculty would give

direction to the NCA team, rather than the NCA team and process giving direction to the

faculty. No parents, community members, or students were part of the team.

The principal presented information to all 46 meeting participants in a large-group

setting. There was no agenda or note taker. The information pertained to the

development of four goals that were to be presented to the NCA steering committee, which planned to assimilate this information into their formal documents that would be submitted to a regional NCA accreditation committee. The information was needed because the school was to host an upcoming NCA goals visit from the organization's oversight committee. The review team representing NCA would be visiting in two weeks and would be reviewing the school's completed profile and planned target goals. All staff were expected to sit on a target-goal team.

The principal gave a brief overview of the process to date and explained that everyone would be regrouping into their target-goal groups for the remainder of the meeting to finish writing up the goals and criteria necessary for NCA. One member asked, "Why do we continue to do this? We have subject-area teams that meet for the district monthly, subject goals, data that dictates what the district wants, and we do all district assessments. We know what we have to do; this just seems like make-up work for a stamp of approval" (SIT observation, April 10, 2001). The principal did not respond because participants were moving to their subgroups.

The subgroups dealt with four main goals. Specifically, the goals were that all students would demonstrate and apply core democratic values, increase their understanding and application of the problem-solving process in science and math, and would feel connected to each other and to at least one adult at the school. The groups met and proceeded to discuss, formulate, and record decisions that were made. The meeting adjourned 85 minutes after it had started, with a reminder that the next meeting would be in two weeks. A participant informed me that meetings were held every two weeks, without exception.

<u>Survey Results</u>

Of the 20 surveys that were provided to the Willow Middle School SIT members, 11 were returned. Respondents assessed ample effort in the group as it pertained to group structure as follows. Overall, the group indicated that the work was not meaningful and was not important to the school; two-thirds of the respondents said they were not motivated to do well. One respondent wrote, "I do not find our school improvement groups either motivating or meaningful. We are going through the motions to fulfill an obligation." However, the majority indicated that the SIT worked well together, even if they were not motivated to do well or give ample effort. Respondents generally were unsure about commitment to the group and tasks or said that commitment was low. Respondents were split as to whether the SIT and not individual members was held accountable for its performance. They indicated that rewards were not prime motivators for the work completed and were unsure whether any rewards existed. All but one respondent indicated that they personally had adequate interpersonal skills to work with a group, were able to work through conflict as a group, devoted time to building commitment within a team, and had leaders who assisted the group in working as a team.

Respondents assessed sufficient knowledge and skill in three areas: group structure, the organizational education system, and remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs through fostered cross-training. Respondents indicated that they generally were unclear about the task and purpose of the SIT. Most said that the committee was large enough to complete its tasks and that members were skilled and able to use task-appropriate strategies to meet goals. The group did not agree that the SIT represented all stakeholders of the school.

Respondents were confident about the team's knowledge and skill level and ability to learn as a group. They also agreed that, as individuals, they had ample opportunities to learn and were confident about their individual skill. The majority did not believe that the team as a whole had ample opportunities to learn as a group. Responses indicated that training and provision of time for the group to train were not high priorities for the organization they represented. All but one respondent indicated that administrators generally determined the training that was provided. "The SIT is administration driven with little direction or leadership," one respondent wrote. "If individual committees determine needs that are contrary to the principal's desires, the committee's decisions are countermanded." Respondents indicated that the members of the SIT did not share responsibility or participate equally; only a few members made most of the decisions, and the SIT generally did not value every member.

The last area explored in the survey was appropriate performance strategies. Respondents indicated that meetings were held regularly and that sharing was done on a regular basis. Leadership assisted in setting deadlines and decrees. The majority of respondents reported they had no say about how the budget was spent or managed. Half of the respondents said that the SIT had access to data and forecasts. However, they had no input into how the data were interpreted, nor did they have any authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on those data. One respondent wrote, "Our first NCA goal several years ago seemed more meaningful [than our current goals], but we could not continue that goal." Two-thirds of respondents either agreed that data provided by administration left little room for SIT interpretation, or were unsure about this. "It makes no sense to me to just jump through some hoops to placate some edict from on high," wrote one member.

Finally, Willow SIT members responded that task-appropriate strategies designed by the group for the school's goals and objectives seemed to be effective. However, respondents generally were unsure or did not believe that the team received organizational assistance in avoiding flawed strategies or developing new ways to work. One respondent wrote, "The staff views the SIT as a waste of time and nothing more than a way to meet a state requirement. What is turned in to the state [the report] has been padded and falsified in the past. Teachers do not see the SIT work as anything that will affect our daily teaching."

Principal Interview

Mr. Butterfield, a former middle-level teacher, had been promoted to assistant principal in a middle school. Then he was an assistant in curriculum at central office for several years before becoming principal of Willow Middle School. This was his first assignment as a middle school principal; his predecessor had held the position for four years. All of Mr. Butterfield's public school experience had been in this district.

Mr. Butterfield's responses were similar to those of the SIT except in matters pertaining to organizational commitment to the task and budget. The principal explained that school improvement was highly valued at the district's administrative and board levels and that a significant budget had been designated for the school improvement process. The school board had developed a districtwide SIP based on the needs of individual buildings and had also committed to the goal of having all schools in the district be NCA accredited.

Mr. Butterfield explained,

> The goals are somewhat dictated by the district; our school improvement team is not held to a specific strategy or internal goal, but they must match what the district has decreed as important. . . . People participate in the process very

111

superficially here. The process isn't so bad; just taking the time to do it is the problem. It all seems very disjointed even though we want it to be a seamless activity that benefits students. (Personal interview, June 6, 2001)

He explained that the SIT had the authority to develop goals, objectives, and strategies as long as they matched state and NCA requirements and were based on documented need as indicated by district research results. "So when our team comes up with goals that don't match what the data indicate as needed, they feel that they have no say as an SIT. My staff doesn't trust the process" (personal interview, June 6, 2001).

Mr. Butterfield shared both frustrations and satisfactions with the school improvement process:

I feel very confident that I know the school improvement process. But the process isn't important if it creates a plan that does not yield data for use in developing strategies that increase student achievement. School improvement happens when we give planning teams the tools they need to work. Those include time, money, data, and information. We give our team all of these things except time. (Personal interview, June 6, 2001)

The principal ended by explaining that school improvement was very important to him. He stated,

We have a whole lot of things working at odds against the process. We have union obligations, federal mandates, state requirements, board edicts, parent advisory council needs, and student concerns. Many times their needs are at odds with each other. I think it's all political. There may be some educational foundation to the planning process we're required to do, but I think it's all politics. I think we just should be told what to do and how to do it. (Personal interview, June 6, 2001)

Summary

Six middle schools and their SITs were described in this chapter, using information gleaned from surveys, document reviews, direct observations, interviews, and published reports from the Michigan Department of Education. I presented and explained the information I collected, using Hackman's process criteria of effectiveness

112

as a lens. The SITs of the six schools were described using themes and parameters of high-priority areas for team effectiveness in organizations, as delineated in the literature. These areas include ample effort, adequate knowledge and skill, and task-appropriate strategies and were examined in light of the group's structure, the school's organizational commitment, and leaders' abilities to coach and consult. Comparisons also were made using nine descriptors. The descriptors included the motivational structure of group tasks, the organizational reward system, and the ability to remedy coordination problems while still building group commitment. Group composition, the organizational education system, and the team's ability to remedy inappropriate weighting of member inputs while fostering cross-training activities also were assessed. Group norms that regulate member behavior and foster scanning and planning, organizational information systems, and the ability to remedy implementation problems while fostering creativity during strategy development were the remaining criteria.

CHAPTER V

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS: FINDINGS FROM THE SIX CASE STUDIES

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidenced effective organizational principles for groups as they planned and implemented strategies for school improvement. A secondary purpose was to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this study differed with regard to team effectiveness. The multiple-case design employed in this study had both advantages and disadvantages. Although evidence and observations from a multitude of areas were gathered to provide a robust pool of information, the resources and time required taxed me on many occasions. However, the multiple-case design with cross-case analysis was necessary because each case was viewed as an experiment or story, allowing me to review the findings from the six cases or experiments following a replication logic (Henson & Barlow, 1976).

The case studies of six Michigan middle schools, presented in Chapter IV, represent a careful selection of schools either (a) to predict similar results through literal replication or (b) to produce through theoretical replication contrasting results but for predictable reasons. Conducting several case studies is similar to conducting several experiments concerning related phenomena; some may be literal replications, whereas others may pursue different patterns of theoretical replications (Yin, 1994). Hackman's model of team effectiveness served as the rich theoretical framework that was used as a replication lens. In this chapter, that framework is used to identify patterns of behavior observed in the six individual case studies.

114

Literal Versus Theoretical Replication

SITs are required to accomplish two tasks or goals as mandated by the state of Michigan. One task or goal is to complete all reporting, verify design plans, and provide evidence of implementation procedures required under the state statutes. The other task, the main goal, is to increase student achievement. Student achievement, or lack of student achievement, in public schools has been the impetus behind increased state and federal intervention into the daily running of school buildings. The resultant legislative edicts requiring specialized assessments, planning initiatives, and the use of SITs designed to represent all stakeholders in a school were governmental attempts at improving schools. Therefore, both process effectiveness and product effectiveness of SITs are crucial for meeting the aforementioned goals.

The effective teams research reviewed for this study helped me develop an optimal framework and theoretical perspective, and Hackman's model of team effectiveness provided the lens I used to assess the effectiveness of six selected organizational groups or SITs. A team is effective when members can work together, continue to learn, and accomplish the tasks the team has been assigned. Using many sources of information and guided by Hackman's lens, I completed a chart indicating the compliance of each school in the study with regard to the specific effectiveness indicators. Additional information, such as the schools' student achievement results, parent participation data, compliance with general state requirements, and demographic data also was considered. These data were recorded in an SPSS data file, and a cross-tab analysis was completed for all the variables for each individual school. Cross-tab analysis was not employed between cases. The results of the analyses enabled me to

assign an overall effectiveness rating to each of the six schools in the study (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 includes team effectiveness criteria and state-required compliance categories, which were used to measure and describe the dual effectiveness of the SITs studied. State compliance categories were included because if these requirements were not met, the team being studied had not accomplished one of its principal tasks, a primary requisite for an effective team. Student achievement, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP test, also was considered, but the reported results were similar across the cases and hardly explained the complicated question of whether the issues SITs consider really influence student achievement. Student achievement as it relates to the descriptions of team effectiveness is explored and explained in more detail in the following cross-case analysis. No attempt is made in the analysis to imply any causality with regard to student achievement. Although governmental agencies appear to view student achievement solely through test results, the issue of student achievement as it pertains to effective teams is much more complex.

Compiling Table 5.1 enabled me to separate and analyze the individual cases by using a logical coding strategy. But in doing this, a difficult problem arose. Two SITs were labeled effective, two were labeled somewhat effective, and two were labeled noneffective. The effectiveness labels as applied in the coding process and used in describing cross-case similarities and differences are not used in a literal sense. Whereas teams might have complied with state mandates and met the delineated and accepted team effectiveness criteria, they might not have been truly effective in the sense that Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) defined the term. Effectiveness in that sense applies to SITs that are purposeful in accomplishing the essential objective of school

116

Table 5.1: SIT effectiveness ratings.

Effectiveness Indicator	SCHOOL NAMES					
	Spruce	Oak	Elm	Poplar	Maple	Willow
Meets state requirements	Meets all	Meets none	Meets most	Meets most	Meets most	Meets most
Principal leadership role	Low	Low	High	High	High	High
Motivational structure of group task	All factors	Few factors	All factors	Some factors	Most factors	No factors
Organizational reward system	Most factors	No factors	Most factors	Some factors	Most factors	Few factors
Remedying coordination problems and building group commitment	All factors	Few factors	All factors	All factors	Few factors	Most factors
Group composition	All factors	Few factors	Most factors	Few factors	Most factors	Few factors
Organizational education system	Most factors	Few factors	Most factors	All factors	Most factors	Some factors
Remedying inappropriate weighting of member inputs and fostering cross-training	All factors	Some factors	All factors	Most factors	All factors	No factors
Group norms that regulate member behavior and foster scanning and planning	All factors	Few factors	Most factors	Few factors	Most factors	Most factors
Organizational information system	Most factors	Few factors	All factors	All factors	Most factors	Few factors
Remedying implementation problems and fostering creativity in strategy development	All factors	Few factors	All factors	All factors	Some factors	Few factors
Ample effort rating	High	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low
Team sufficient knowledge and skill rating	High	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Task-appropriate performance strategies rating	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Overall team effectiveness rating	Effective	Not effective	Effective	Somewhat effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective

improvement—increased student achievement. Therefore, Table 5.1 indicates that some teams were doing things right but not doing the right things, whereas other teams were doing the right things but not doing the things right. A matter and issue of goal displacement for teams is apparent, and therefore is explored and described in the analysis to follow.

Student achievement, or the result of SIT planning and strategy implementation, generally guides and motivates individuals and groups. One characteristic mentioned repeatedly in the literature concerning organizations and teams that succeed and are effective is that these organizations are concerned with processes only as far as those processes provide results. Collegiality in a team that emphasizes results as a goal is essential for effective teamwork (Brigham, 1994; Little, 1990). In the ensuing cross-case analysis, I discuss the theme of student achievement, which is not included in the original team effectiveness criteria, and describe patterns that are not effective for effective teams as well as those that are effective for noneffective teams. In the cross-case analysis I view the two SITs labeled effective as literal replications of the theoretical framework used in this study, and the four SITs labeled somewhat effective or noneffective as theoretical replications of that framework. Patterns are identified and pattern matching is discussed throughout the analysis.

Spruce and Elm Middle Schools

Both Spruce and Elm Middle Schools had SITs that met the criteria for effective teams and state compliance standards as outlined in this research. Hackman's (1990) three dimensions of team effectiveness that were measured in this study are a group's productive output, the degree to which the process of carrying out the work enhances members' capability to work together interdependently in the future, and the degree to

118

which "the group experience contributes to the growth and personal well-being of team members" (p. 7).

Spruce Middle School was approximately twice the size of Elm Middle School. Both schools were served by a principal and an assistant principal, and both were experiencing declining enrollments. Each school was working on increasing its enrollment through a schools-of-choice program, but Elm had not been as successful as Spruce. Both school districts were experiencing budget difficulties that had resulted in diminished resources for instruction and decreased teaching staff. Elm was a fairly new school, having been built and occupied in 1999, and Spruce had been expanded and fully renovated. Union negotiations and labor strife were apparent at Spruce, and Elm reported that such issues had been a problem in the past. The current three-year contract at Elm had eliminated much internal faculty strife, whereas Spruce's teachers were still negotiating. Spruce had a new principal with little or no experience in middle school education or the school improvement process, whereas Elm's principal was a veteran of both middle-level education and the school improvement process. Both schools had a long and rich history of involvement in school improvement, both with the state-required format and NCA.

The two schools' foundation allowances over the past three years differed by approximately $290 per student, with Spruce receiving the higher allocation. The proportion of students receiving free and reduced-price lunches had declined at Spruce (14.1%) but increased at Elm (22.3%). There was a $393 difference in total revenue generated per pupil between the two schools, with Spruce generating the higher amount. The current operating expenditures for Elm were $479 more than those for Spruce. The average teacher salary was $13,685 higher at Elm.

The communities that Spruce and Elm Middle Schools represented were both going through change. The school districts were becoming bedroom communities for larger metropolitan areas, and average new-housing costs were increasing. New buyers in both communities generally were professionals and had few children. Each community was 95% to 96% white.

Student achievement, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP test, generally had risen for both schools. Spruce Middle School showed higher gains than Elm in all areas except writing, where both schools reported a decline; Spruce experienced the largest drop. Students' overall gains in 7th-grade math were 16.1% for Spruce and 11.9% for Elm. Gains reported for 7th-grade reading were similar, with Spruce having a 22.4% gain and Elm 13%. Achievement had risen for both schools in 8th-grade science, as well (Spruce 11.7% and Elm .7). However, student achievement in 8th-grade writing dropped for both schools (a decline of 21.9% at Spruce and 15.6% at Elm). The decline in writing scores may be associated with an overall decrease reported in the state because the MEAP test for this area had changed significantly. Few schools in the state reported gains in writing, and only one school in this study experienced a gain.

Spruce and Elm Middle Schools each possessed detailed documentation of the schools' past school improvement planning strategies and current progress. Annual reports, SIPs, and minutes and agendas for SIT meetings were available. A school profile and NCA reports for each school were provided for my review. Long-term SIPs submitted by the schools met all of the state's compliance criteria. Goals, objectives, and strategies developed by the SITs were defined and measured. Successes and failures of each team's attempted initiatives were also explained and published. Both schools had

designated cognitive and affective goals in place. Gender-equity problems were showing

signs of gradual improvement.

Spruce Middle School was further along in its individual cycle of the NCA school

improvement process, having goals, objectives, and strategies in place. The Elm SIT had

identified goals and was in the process of determining strategies and objectives for those

goals. Elm Middle School was in its third complete cycle of the NCA school

improvement process, and Spruce was in its first cycle. Parent conference participation

data indicated that Spruce had a much higher rate of parent participation than Elm—82%

versus 48%.

Both Spruce and Elm Middle Schools used their NCA steering committee and

NCA process as the main vehicle for school improvement in their buildings. Their

structures were similar, and each followed the same format for completing school

improvement work. The processes each school used were delineated, determined, and

required by NCA, and the project was reviewed annually by a visiting NCA compliance

team. Each school had devoted time, money, and effort to NCA training in the

compliance process, as well as in completing compliance paperwork.

Although it was slightly more structured in its meeting norms, the Spruce SIT

looked similar to Elm's. Target-goal committees devised action plans for school goals

and advised both the Spruce and Elm steering committees. Target-goal teams were

required to include individuals representing all of the school's stakeholders: teachers,

administrators, other school staff, parents, students, and community members. The

Spruce team met this state and NCA requirement. The Elm team did not, as only teachers

and administrators were involved. Much time at both teams' meetings was devoted to

discussing proposed compliance activities and how faculty and school personnel

responsible for implementing the strategies would receive those suggestions. Both teams used and reviewed collective bargaining agreements to design school improvement activities, schedule planning times, and implement new initiatives. Student achievement was not discussed during any of the meetings I observed for each group. Discussions primarily concerned reports of past and proposed SIT initiatives.

Both teams received financing from their districts, as well as some time provisions. Spruce received significantly more time and money for school improvement work than did Elm. The Spruce co-chairs each received a stipend and were given monthly release time to complete NCA compliance records. The Elm co-chairs received nothing extra. All teachers at both middle schools were expected to serve on a target-goal committee. Target-goal meetings were held as required staff meetings at Spruce, and that school's teacher contract mandated at least 15 meetings per year. Elm Middle School had no such provision, and therefore could not require teachers to attend meetings. The Spruce team had an annual school improvement budget of $4,000; Elm's budget for school improvement was $1,000. Neither principal interacted overtly with SIT members at meetings, and both reported that the co-chairs of the SITs were totally empowered to proceed as they and the team deemed necessary. Attendance for both SITs was voluntary, but contractual safeguards at Spruce had resulted in their having more meetings than Elm had, with consistently high attendance.

The SITs at Elm and Spruce Middle Schools, although similar, differed in several ways, especially with regard to members' confidence in their ability to complete the school improvement tasks required. Survey responses from both schools' SIT members indicated that both teams assessed their effort as very high and said that SIT members were highly motivated to complete their tasks. The Elm SIT was confident that the work

122

they did and the initiatives they developed were highly effective, thereby making their work on the committee a meaningful experience. This was not the case with Spruce. Respondents there expressed doubt as to whether the group's work was effective and indicated that the school improvement experience was more demanding and less meaningful than they had expected. SIT members at both schools indicated that group and individual rewards were not incentives to do better. Furthermore, they reported that if rewards were present, the group was recognized, and not individual members. However, both teams asserted that rewards were not necessarily an impetus to do well.

Spruce SIT members indicated that their group received little or no assistance in remedying coordination problems and building group commitment, but they did validate that time and resources were spent on building commitment within the group to accomplish the SIT process. Elm SIT members reported that little or no time was provided for building team commitment or team leadership. Respondents from both schools identified that their teams were led by current members and not administrators. Also, respondents from both schools reported that their groups were skilled in resolving conflict and worked interdependently with one another, using highly effective interpersonal skills.

The Spruce SIT members reported that they were clear on the task and purpose of the SIT. This was not the case at Elm. Elm members expressed confusion and doubt as to why the work was being completed. Both groups indicated that their committees were large enough to complete assigned tasks and that members were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals. The Spruce team was not in agreement as to whether their SIT represented all stakeholders of the school. In contrast, a majority

of the Elm group reported that the SIT represented all stakeholders of the school, even though the only members were teachers.

Both teams, confident in their skill levels, reported that training was not a high priority for them or the organization they represented. If any training did take place, it was at the request of the team and not administrators. No training for group effectiveness was reported at either school. Both teams indicated that they worked well together and that all members were skilled. Not all members participated equally, but all respondents reported that they shared equally in decision making and had equal influence in the group. No weighting for any individual's participation was evident.

SIT members from both schools indicated that meetings were held regularly, formal procedures were in place, team members had the ability to work together frequently, and they operated within a set budget. However, the majority indicated they had no say in how the budget was spent. Respondents reported that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, determined how the data were interpreted, and had full authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on that information. All respondents reported that data provided by the district's administration allowed for full SIT interpretation. They indicated no pressure from administrators or the district to implement ideas that originated outside of the group.

The Spruce and Elm SIT members differed greatly in the following area. Respondents from Spruce indicated that they were not sure whether the plans and strategies they developed were effective. Although they believed they received adequate assistance and resources to complete the process of school improvement, day-to-day operations of the school were ignored. A majority of respondents indicated little interest in or knowledge about any assistance that may have been provided for the team.

Conversely, the Elm SIT members were sure that strategies developed by the team were effective. Team members reported that they received assistance in avoiding failed strategies, developing new strategies, developing effective working conditions, and carrying out day-to-day activities at the school. All respondents reported that the SIT could develop effective strategies for meeting identified goals.

Spruce Middle School's principal, Ms. Gates, had been in her position for about eight months. She was an experienced high school teacher and principal, but this was her first assignment with middle school children and teachers. Mr. Earl, principal of Elm Middle School, was experienced as both a middle school teacher and principal and had been in the present position for eight years. Both principals shared their thoughts concerning their SIT activities as they related to group structure, organizational commitment, and coaching and consulting.

Ms. Gates did not have an interest in the school improvement process, admitted she was not experienced in the process, and viewed it as outside the parameters of a school day or the school's mission. "Sure it seems to be important," she said, "but if it really is important, why don't we have enough money or time provided to complete it? We pay for what we value. I haven't seen any money here yet" (personal interview, March 16, 2001).

Mr. Earl also voiced frustration at the lack of time for meetings and the fact that virtually no training was taking place. "We don't have time for training, and training in how to work as a group is a low priority. We barely have time to complete the paperwork required for NCA accreditation and the required forms we need to send to the state. Where is there any time to implement programs?" (personal interview, March 7, 2001). He confirmed that any training that did take place usually took the form of an

NCA in-service session designed to complete the required tasks and reporting necessary for end-of-year reviews. "The school improvement process is nothing more than creating paper reports that verify that all of us have been following the process correctly. I don't believe it has anything to do with good teaching or learning," Ms. Gates added (personal interview, March 16, 2001). However, her responses to the survey questions we covered during the interview concurred with those of Spruce's SIT. The area in which the responses did not match concerned group structure. Ms. Gates thought the team was too large, exerted more influence than it should, was run by a few individuals, and allowed her little say as the building leader.

Mr. Earl admitted that although he was a veteran of many NCA school improvement initiatives, he was still not at all clear about the task of the SIT. "We follow all of the rules the state sets out. We have the meetings, we gather the information, we follow the process and complete the reports. Does it make a difference? I'm not so sure it does" (personal interview, March 7, 2001). Although he was not as adamant as Ms. Gates, Mr. Earl discussed his frustration with the lack of money and time available to complete school improvement activities at his school. "We get the job done and all with volunteer time and no extra money. I would say we have a very effective and motivated team here. We could do it so much better, though, if we had some resources" (personal interview, March 7, 2001).

The principals described their teams as groups that worked independently of the principal's guidance. Mr. Earl stated that he was a frequent guest and participant with target-goal committees but not a leader of the group. Although she was less active, Ms. Gates also said she was confident that the SIT at Spruce was well run and needed little of her assistance. Both Mr. Earl and Ms. Gates expressed their confidence in the SIT in

their buildings. Each was positive that the teams had motivated members, the tasks designed and implemented were meaningful, and the organizational commitment in their individual buildings was high. Neither principal was as sure of the organizational commitment of the district. "All staff training, release time for teachers, and school improvement budgets were either cut or dramatically decreased in the buildings last year," Mr. Earl said. "I know our superintendent thinks school improvement is important, but it's obviously not as important as other things in our district, and I agree" (personal interview, March 7, 2001).

Both principals also expressed doubt as to whether the SIT really had designed strategies that had resulted in improvements to the school. For instance, neither principal could relate specific examples of increased student achievement but insisted that work completed by the SIT had resulted in some form of increased student achievement. Both principals gave examples of school improvement initiatives that included ideas and strategies that changed existing structures in the schools. Examples included daily schedule changes, staff meeting changes, parent notification processes, and some development of student assessments. Both principals expressed a need to provide more time for school improvement planning, and both stated that the SIT comprised the best and brightest of the school employees. When asked specifically how any initiatives increased student achievement, neither principal was able to provide detailed documentation. Mr. Earl responded, "Teachers are very motivated, interested, and devoted to classroom tasks now. Student achievement must be increasing" (personal interview, March 7, 2001).

The Spruce SIT membership represented more different and varied stakeholders than the other five SITs in the study. However, Ms. Gates reported that parents and

community members had little say on the committee. The Elm SIT had the least diversity in terms of stakeholders, yet Mr. Earl stated that parents and the community significantly influenced SIT decision making. Both principals expressed anxiety about and frustration with the day-to-day operation of their schools as it pertained to SIT planning issues.

Observations and Patterns

The school improvement process was the main product for both of these schools. Both SITs dedicated the majority of their time, resources, and effort to meeting the compliance reporting and documentation goals of the state-mandated school improvement process. Viewing the findings through the lens of process criteria for effectiveness, I determined that the teams appeared to meet all of the criteria for an effective team. However, the process had created high anxiety at each school site as neither SIT demonstrated any real authority for implementing change.

There was no evidence to suggest that increased student achievement was considered a primary goal of either team. The NCA steering committees at the two schools, the primary determiners and drivers of the process, approached each goal and strategy by considering adults in the school a first priority. If a goal or strategy was developed but existing contracts or procedures hindered its implementation, the goal or strategy was discarded. Neither team had the authority to evaluate or require staff to implement any adopted strategy for improvement.

Time and resources were identified as large problems for these teams. No training for team effectiveness was employed, no need was perceived for training for effectiveness, and there was no indication that principles of organizational behavior, organizational development, or human resources were considered a part of change or reform. Neither principal viewed team effectiveness training or the employment of

128

organizational research as necessary or integral to the team approach to school improvement. Any training of personnel that was identified dealt solely with NCA compliance issues or was designed to meet process requirements for developing acceptable written plans and evaluation reports. There was no indication that professional development for teachers to address student achievement problems was being considered or implemented.

District goals existed for both schools, but no general anxiety or pressure was observed within the teams, during interviews, or in the surveys to suggest that team members were adhering to central office dictates. There was a general recognition of district goals and a need to match and enhance these goals, but that was all. No evidence was gathered to suggest that school achievement was a determiner of school goals.

Key Points

1. Both SITs were dedicated to meeting the goals of the school improvement process.

2. The school improvement process, and not increased student achievement, was the main product of the teams I observed.

3. Both teams reported high anxiety about the process.

4. The NCA steering committee acted as the primary determiner of the school improvement process.

5. There was no evidence that student achievement was a determiner of school goals.

6. Adults at the school were considered a first priority in setting goals and strategies for school improvement initiatives.

7. Time and resources were identified as impediments to the process.

8. There was no training for team effectiveness or recognition of human resources, organizational development, or organizational behavior principles for team development. Neither administrators nor team members indicated that they perceived these principles or training as necessary.

9. All reported training dealt with NCA assistance in developing acceptable plans and reports and completing the process.

10. There was no indication that professional development for teachers to address student achievement problems was being considered or implemented.

11. School district goals existed, but these goals were viewed as secondary to the goals developed at the site.

12. At both schools, documentation required by NCA and the state met or exceeded all requirements.

Oak and Willow Middle Schools

The SITs at both Oak and Willow Middle Schools failed to meet the criteria for effective teams and state compliance standards as outlined in this research. The three dimensions of team effectiveness that were considered are a group's productive output, the degree to which carrying out the work enhances members' ability to work interdependently in the future, and the degree to which "the group experience contributes to the growth and personal well-being of team members" (Hackman, 1990, p. 7).

At the end of the 1999 school year, Oak and Willow Middle Schools had 677 and 888 students in attendance and 34 and 40 certified teachers, respectively. One principal and one assistant principal represented the administrative team in both schools. Both schools were experiencing a period of increasing enrollment, with continued projections for gain over the next three to five years. An observable difference between the schools

was that, despite the increasing number of students, the individual building budget was decreasing at Oak, whereas it was increasing at Willow. The Oak school district was using an increasing amount of the general fund for repairs, building maintenance, and portable classrooms due to several bond defeats. The Willow district had passed two successive bonds and devoted more money to operating its schools' instructional programs. At both buildings, teaching positions had been added and three-year teacher contracts ratified. Both principals had been in their positions about the same time and were the most stable administrative presence in either school's memory.

Oak Middle School was in need of extensive repair, but Willow had received additional space as well as extensive renovations. The foundation allowances over the past three years differed by approximately $259 per student, with Willow receiving the greater amount. The proportions of free and reduced-price lunch populations were declining at both schools, leaving Oak with 8.1% and Willow with 8.5%. Total revenue generated per pupil was $6,195 at Oak, $125 more than at Willow, with current operating expenditures calculated at $4,585 for Oak and $3,895 for Willow. The average teacher salary at Oak was $53,368, $2,893 more than at Willow.

At the time of this study, the communities these schools represented were going through similar changes. Each was becoming a highly desirable bedroom community for three larger metropolitan areas near them. Average new-housing costs were higher in the Oak area. Both school districts were attracting buyers who generally were middle class, had dual incomes, and had school-age children. The housing market was booming in both communities, each of which was more than 95% white.

Student achievement, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP test, generally rose for both schools between 1996-97 and 1998-99, except in writing, where both

131

schools reported a loss; Oak experienced the larger decline. Overall gains in 7th-grade math were 26.3% for Oak and 20% for Willow. The schools' gains in 7th-grade reading were similar, with Oak reporting a 35% gain and Willow 35.6%. Achievement had risen for both schools in 8th-grade science (Oak 5% and Willow 9.4%). However, student achievement at both schools had dropped in 8th-grade writing (Oak 28.6% and Willow 14.4%). The decline in writing scores may have occurred because the MEAP test in this area changed significantly, and there was a general decline in writing scores throughout the state.

The documents made available to me differed greatly between the schools. Willow Middle School maintained and provided me with detailed documentation of the school's past planning and progress, such as multiple annual reports, three SIPs, and their most recent NCA accreditation materials. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured. A detailed accounting of the successes and failures of the initiatives over the past three years was also given. These compliance features of state-mandated school improvement met all of the state criteria.

In contrast, Oak Middle School met none of the compliance criteria for school improvement, nor was Oak able to provide me with a written SIP. Evidence suggested that no formal written plan had been available at the building level for the public for the past four years. There were no minutes or agendas for SIT meetings. Annual reports published by the district for the past three years were provided for my review; they indicated that specific goals did exist for Oak schools. Although the NCA had just recently accepted Oak Middle School as a candidate for outcomes accreditation, all NCA application materials and data had been lost and thus were not available for review. At

the time of the study, there was no written school profile, no target goals for the school, no objectives or strategies developed, and no budget assigned.

Gender-equity problems existed in many academic areas at both schools. The parent conference participation rate at Willow was 71%. This information was not available for Oak Middle School.

The teaching staffs at both Oak and Willow Middle Schools were expected to be members of and attend all SIT meetings, which were scheduled as faculty meetings. Although there was an NCA steering committee at each site, both schools had decided that the school improvement process would be carried out with faculty input giving direction to the NCA process, rather than the NCA steering committee giving direction to the SIT. No parents, community member, or students were part of either SIT, placing the teams at odds with state requirements. No agenda was distributed or available for either of the team meetings I observed.

Both SIT meetings were concerned with student achievement issues, assessment, and planning of goals and objectives. The Oak team was meeting to review student achievement results in math, social studies, science, language arts, and fine arts, all identified goals in the annual report published by Oak's district. The Willow team was meeting to assimilate the already gathered assessment data so that they could clearly articulate NCA compliance processes for an upcoming NCA audit. Student achievement and assessment were goals for both teams. However, both SITs questioned the time devoted to record information already in place for mandated reporting issues. Several team members commented that district initiatives that already were in place contained the needed information being discussed. In addition, some expressed doubt that the teams

could deviate from district procedures regarding curriculum, assessment, and methodology of instruction.

Although there was no designated recorder at either meeting, the groups from both schools met and proceeded to discuss, formulate, and record the decisions being made. Individual group recommendations were to be provided to the principal and then the NCA teams. No participant on either SIT interacted with me after the meetings adjourned. I did request copies of the meeting reports from administrators and received them from Willow but not from Oak. After I had made several requests over a two-month period, an Oak administrator informed me that the reports from the meeting had been completed and shared at the school but were now lost.

My observations of each of these groups led me to conclude that meetings were not formal but were scheduled on an as-needed basis. Group members' attendance was voluntary unless the meetings were designated as staff meetings in their respective collective bargaining agreements. No one at either school was designated a formal team member for voluntary meetings. However, NCA steering committee members were designated. No one could provide a list of members from Oak.

Survey results gathered from both Oak and Willow SIT members indicated several negative themes and patterns as related to team effectiveness criteria. Low effort, uncertainty or negative responses concerning whether the SIT work was meaningful or effective, and low motivation to complete tasks pervaded the results from both schools. Responses generally indicated that members of neither team worked well together. In addition, respondents did not think the SITs at their schools were any good or effective, nor did they think the school improvement process was valuable or effective. Respondents generally were unsure or reported that organizational commitment to the

SIT and tasks was low, but responses also indicated that the superintendent and/or the central office in each district primarily set the goals based on centrally gathered data and forecasts. Responses from Oak indicated little confidence that the SIT at their school completed their tasks, put forth ample effort to do their work, and were motivationally charged. Willow respondents indicated that once the team had a clear directive, they could complete any task, but they resented doing projects just to fulfill paper requirements.

Respondents from both schools indicated strongly that SIT members had high interpersonal skills, yet they stated that the building teams usually could not work through conflict. Respondents from both schools were not sure or noted that there was no reward for being a team member, but they thought that group rewards might be present. Respondents from both schools agreed that no time was provided for building team commitment or team leadership. All respondents reported that they were not sure whether individual rewards motivated them, or they disagreed with this idea.

Respondents from both teams indicated that they were not very clear about the tasks and purpose of the SIT. Most respondents from Oak and Willow stated that, individually, they were skilled and able to develop task-appropriate strategies to meet goals, but the Oak team did not believe that the group as a whole was skilled. The majority of members of both teams stated that their respective SITs did not represent all stakeholders of the school.

Respondents from both teams reported that providing time and training in school improvement or in group effectiveness were not high priorities for the school district they represented. Respondents from Oak and Willow were confident in their teams' knowledge and skill levels and ability to learn. They also agreed that, as individuals, they

had ample opportunities to learn and were confident in their individual skill levels. Virtually all indicated that administrators generally determined any training that was provided.

Responses from both teams indicated that neither team's members worked well together. Respondents were in agreement that SIT members did not share responsibility or participate equally; only a few members made most of the decisions. Most respondents did not believe they were valued or had equal influence with other members. Respondents indicated that the leadership of both teams relied on only a few members and that, generally speaking, the SIT did not value every member.

In the last area explored through the survey, task-appropriate performance strategies, there were different results for each school. Willow respondents reported that meetings were held regularly, that sharing was done on a regular basis, and that leadership assisted in setting deadlines and decrees. Oak respondents reported otherwise. Also, although half of the respondents from Willow indicated that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, like Oak respondents they claimed they had no input into how the data were interpreted and had no authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on that information. Both teams also indicated that they were unsure as to whether data provided by administration left any room for SIT interpretation for future strategy or goal development. The majority of respondents from both schools reported they had no say in how the budget was spent or managed.

Both Oak and Willow SIT members indicated that they were not sure that any strategies developed by their teams were effective. They also indicated that they received little or no assistance in avoiding failed strategies, developing new strategies, developing effective working conditions, or carrying out day-to-day activities at the school. Finally,

a majority of Oak respondents stated that the SIT could not develop effective strategies for identified goals, whereas a majority of the Willow team stated they could do so.

Ms. Foote and Mr. Butterfield, the principals of these schools, were both experienced administrators. Their backgrounds were similar in that they both had been teachers, had served in central office roles for a portion of their careers, and eventually had moved to a middle-level principal position, remaining in that role for a number of years. Both Ms. Foote and Mr. Butterfield stated that SIT work was very meaningful and important to them. However, Mr. Butterfield seemed to be more in touch with the attitudes of his team than Ms. Foote was. She believed the team at Oak was very effective and was dedicated to completing its tasks; team members worked well together and were committed and dedicated to each other. However, this is not what her team indicated through the surveys. In contrast, Mr. Butterfield's responses were similar to those of his SIT, except he had more faith in the process than the Willow team did.

Both administrators stressed a commitment to student achievement on the part of their central office administrators and voiced teachers' frustration with perceived central office mandates versus individual building initiatives. Both acknowledged that teachers participated in the SITs because they were required to do so and stated that too much time was spent on process and not enough on assessing student achievement and designing programs to increase achievement. Neither principal connected the process to the product—increased student achievement. Both felt pressure to complete the process and volunteered that the process had become the product in their respective buildings.

School improvement initiatives, including training opportunities, at both schools were funded through their district offices, leaving little site-based control over the budget. Both principals believed school improvement was necessary and important, and they

accepted responsibility for its success or failure at their buildings. Both principals worked with teams constituted solely of teachers, and both asserted that the teachers in their schools were skilled instructors, even though they resented the school improvement process and participated in it only superficially. Each principal acknowledged that his or her staff members were angry and frustrated with the process and verified a heavy influence from central office on achieving district goals. Both principals said that, although they were free to develop strategies with their teams, the main goals of the district were not negotiable. Also, they both believed that their teams designed effective strategies.

The two principals implied that the school improvement process in their buildings seemed very disjointed. Time was a problem for both of them. Also, the principals gave examples of their SITs' distrust of the school improvement process. For instance, the team might devise a strategy or plan, but if that plan did not match state and NCA requirements and was not based on documented need as defined by district research results, it would be rejected. Thus, staff at neither Oak nor Willow trusted the process. Finally, the two principals reported frustrations with the lack of time, money, and information available to them. The principals also cited additional frustrations that seemed to work against the process: union obligations, federal mandates, state requirements, board edicts, parent advisory council needs, and student concerns.

Observations and Patterns

Neither the school improvement process nor student achievement seemed to be a perceived product for either Oak or Willow. Neither SIT dedicated much time, resources, or effort toward meeting the reporting and documentation goals of the state-mandated school improvement process. In one case, nothing existed; in the other case,

138

administrators simply completed the required reports. Viewing the findings through the lens of process criteria for effectiveness, I concluded that these two teams appeared to meet few of the criteria; as a result, I labeled both noneffective. Anger and frustration, not anxiety as expressed in the teams that I superficially labeled effective, were well documented at each school site. In my observations, I recorded several examples of the teams' lacking the authority either to plan or implement change.

There was evidence that increased student achievement was considered a primary goal for both teams and the schools' principals. However, neither team seemed to perceive that the school improvement process was a vehicle that could enhance student achievement. The NCA steering committees at the two schools were not the primary determiners or drivers of the process. Rather, the teams were primarily ceremonial committees that validated predetermined school improvement decisions made by administrators. The entire school faculties were considered to constitute the SITs. As with the effective teams identified earlier in this study, the improvement strategies these teams developed considered adult roles in the building as a first priority. If a goal or strategy was developed but existing contracts or procedures hindered its implementation, the goal or strategy was discarded. Neither team had the authority to evaluate or require staff to implement any adopted strategy for improvement.

Time and resources were identified as large problems for these teams. No training was provided in team effectiveness strategies, no need was perceived for adult training for effectiveness, and there was no indication that principles of organizational behavior, organizational development, or human resources were considered a part of change or reform. Neither principal viewed team effectiveness training or use of human resource strategies as necessary or integral to the team approach for school improvement.

Virtually no training of either type, team effectiveness or professional development for teachers to address student achievement problems, was being considered or implemented.

District goals existed for both schools, but these seemed to foster anxiety and resentment within the teams. Interviews and survey responses indicated that team members believed they could not deviate from central office dictates. They grudgingly agreed that building goals needed to match and enhance district goals. Further, there was little evidence to suggest that student achievement was a determiner of strategies to meet the building goals. The teams at both schools viewed the goals as separate from student achievement initiatives.

Key Points

1. No training or professional development in team effectiveness strategies was noted.

2. Faculty members directed the school improvement process; the NCA steering committee had just a ceremonial role.

3. Record keeping and documentation were either suspect or completely missing.

4. Compliance issues were barely met, and documentable sources of information were suspect in most cases.

5. Virtually all individuals and groups stressed student achievement as a primary goal, but the goal did not seem to be connected to the school improvement processes observed.

6. The school improvement process was viewed as an exercise to complete in addition to internal work with student achievement, and it was highly resented in these schools. Team members expressed anger about and suspicion or distrust of the process.

7. Central office influence on building goal setting was apparent, and team members indicated that their work seemed superfluous because administrators determined the plan.

8. Time and lack of available resources were noted as major impediments to team effectiveness.

9. Survey respondents were confident about their individual abilities but did not believe that other team members were as capable as they were.

10. Team members indicated that they saw little or no reason to work as a team and would like to be given a formula or plan to follow.

11. Individuals on both teams concurred that student achievement was the main goal but that administrators forced the process; as a result, the process hindered efforts to improve student achievement. Student achievement and the SIP were viewed as two different objectives.

12. School activities that respondents described appeared to be disjointed and unconnected. The process was viewed as an extra task.

13. Both principals described the process as a necessary task and not one that led to an observable improvement in student achievement.

Poplar and Maple Middle Schools

The SITs at both Poplar and Maple Middle Schools were labeled somewhat effective on the basis of the criteria for effective teams and state compliance standards considered in this research. The three dimensions of team effectiveness that were measured were a group's productive output, the degree to which the work enhanced members' ability to work interdependently in the future, and the degree to which "the

group experience contributes to the growth and personal well-being of team members" (Hackman, 1990, p. 7).

Maple Middle School was about twice the size of Poplar Middle School. At both schools, the administrative team comprised one principal and an assistant principal. Poplar was experiencing a period of declining enrollment, whereas Maple was dealing with a substantial increase in its student population. Enrollment decline had slowed at Poplar due to the district's adoption of a schools-of-choice initiative, which resulted in families from a neighboring district choosing to send their children to Poplar. Maple's enrollment was increasing due to a surge in new-housing developments within its attendance boundaries.

Poplar Middle School was in need of extensive repair, as was Maple. Maple students and staff were scheduled to move to a new building, whereas the Poplar community would remain in its current facility. Several faculty at Poplar shared teaching assignments with both the high school and elementary schools; in contrast, Maple was fully staffed and shared no faculty with other schools. The principal at Poplar had been there for nine years, whereas Maple's principal at been at the school a little more than one year.

The foundation allowance over the past three years averaged about $46 more per student at Poplar than at Maple. The free and reduced-price lunch population was 20.7% at Poplar and 7.6% at Maple. Total revenue generated per pupil was $212 more at Poplar than at Maple, whereas the current operating expenditures were about $401 more per student at Maple than at Poplar. The average teacher salary was $5,492 more per year at Maple than at Poplar. The communities that Poplar and Maple represented were relatively stable. Although housing starts were booming in the Maple district, average

housing costs were similar in both districts. Current housing prices reflected a nominal increase from three years ago, and they were similar in both areas. New buyers in the Maple district generally were first-time homeowners, had school-age children, and were employed in the metropolitan areas bordering the district. Poplar served a more stable population within and near its border. Maple did not participate in a schools-of-choice program. Both schools served communities that were 97% white.

At both schools, student achievement, as measured by the state-mandated MEAP test, generally rose in the last three years. Poplar reported a slight decline in the area of writing, and of the six schools in this research, Maple was the only one to report an increase in achievement in writing. Overall gains for 7th-grade math students were 15.1% for Poplar and 5.1% for Maple. Gains reported for 7th-grade reading were similar, with Poplar reporting a 20.4% gain and Maple 16.2%. Achievement in 8th-grade science rose for both schools (Poplar 11.9% and Maple 7.1%). In writing, Poplar students' achievement dropped 7.1%, and Willow students' scores rose 4.1%. Both schools reported much better scores in writing than the other four schools in the study, even though the MEAP test for writing had changed significantly.

Both Poplar and Maple Middle Schools maintained and provided me with detailed documentation of past planning and progress in regard to their school improvement efforts. For this study, I reviewed annual reports for the past three years, three SIPs, a profile of the school and community, and their most recent NCA yearly report. No minutes or agendas of past meetings of either SIT were made available to me. The three- to five-year SIPs for these schools met all state compliance criteria. Goals, objectives, and strategies were defined and measured. Successes and failures of past SIT initiatives also were available.

Each school had designated goals. Poplar maintained the same goals they had had for the past four years. Goal one was to align all curriculum with the state benchmarks and standards, and goal two was to develop an assessment plan and procedure that would drive instruction, as measured by attainment of the benchmarks and standards. Maple had maintained its same goals for the past three years. The school had designated communications and global implications of the social sciences and science as their high-priority goals. Alignment with the state benchmarks and assessment also were high-priority items. Parent conference participation at Poplar was reported to be 53%, whereas at Maple it was 65%.

Both Poplar and Maple Middle Schools had unique school improvement processes that did not match patterns observed in the other four cases in this research. Both schools viewed their NCA steering committee as the formal SIT, but the SITs in the two buildings worked very differently. For instance, no SIT observations were possible at Poplar Middle School because no formal SIT existed as defined by the state of Michigan or the current literature. I determined this because the SIT met only twice yearly to review paperwork completed by the principal for NCA accreditation and state compliance requirements. The SIT at Poplar acted primarily as a central data-gathering and data-interpretation group during the year. "We believe in the school improvement process," the principal stated, "the way we do it. Not necessarily the way the state mandates we do it." The principal continued, "School improvement is so ingrained in our culture, it would be ludicrous to develop a separate and distinct group to do what we all do on a daily basis" (personal interview, March 14, 2001).

Maple Middle School also viewed its NCA steering committee as the central driving force for school improvement at the building level. However, Maple designated

certain staff meetings as school improvement meetings to review and assist their SIT in formalizing the SIP at the school. The SIT meeting I observed at Maple, a faculty meeting, seemed to indicate that school staff, using assessment data provided, developed strategies for instruction to increase student achievement at the school as ideas for the steering committee to consider. The NCA steering committee made a final determination as to what action would take place. Poplar, on the other hand, designated every faculty meeting as school improvement based; therefore, faculty became the primary contributors to all school improvement strategies that the NCA team managed. Faculty at Poplar responded to and reported on strategies developed by the district that were then managed through the building's steering committee. The principal at Poplar, like the one at Maple, viewed the entire faculty as a team; both schools viewed the school improvement process as one based on student achievement and nothing else. The process was considered to be the planning vehicle for increasing student achievement.

Both principals shared that expectations at the district level were clear. Poplar's principal explained,

> Assessment means nothing if it cannot be translated to an action plan for students. Our superintendent maintains that assessment must generate data that is used to formulate goals for student achievement. No goals can exist if there is no data to justify them. Our school improvement activities are based on that premise. We spend little time or energy on teaming processes to get to the obvious. (Personal interview, March 14, 2001)

Maple's principal shared that his district had a sophisticated curriculum and assessment department that notified the buildings of their strengths and weaknesses. Although specific strategies were not mandated, they were strongly suggested and almost always proved to be effective, as evidenced by gains in student achievement.

At Poplar, the principal completed all paperwork required by the state and NCA, and the steering committee reviewed the product before accepting and submitting it. The

finished documents were then made available to staff. At Maple, the steering committee completed the report, shared it with staff, and then made a final decision on the product for submission. Several staff committees met throughout the year at both schools, and information as to what had or had not been accomplished was shared at faculty meetings and through internal bulletins.

A strong central administrative mandate was apparent in both districts. Although no formal team was observed at Poplar, information in published documents from both schools implied that goals were set at the district level. Buildings set goals that met the district goals. All goals were based on data from state assessments, and all strategies had to have a research base embedded in their development. No activities, in-service opportunities, material purchases, or professional development activities were allowed unless a link could be established between the goals and the planned initiative. Finally, both principals took an active role in all school improvement meetings. Although I did not observe this at Poplar, other data I collected provided evidence that the Poplar principal acted similarly to the Maple principal and was a consistent facilitator at all school-improvement-based meetings and discussions.

At both schools there were similar responses to the survey questions, with some minor variations. Overall, respondents reported that they were motivated to do well, worked well together, and were effective in designing and implementing strategies for school improvement. Respondents indicated that work on the team was meaningful and important and that the group, rather than individuals, was held accountable for the work completed. Respondents from both schools were not sure whether tangible or intangible rewards were present. Nevertheless, a majority of respondents from both schools said that rewards for the group or for individuals had little effect on their performance or

desire to do well. Most respondents indicated that the SIT was sufficiently staffed, could work together to reach consensus, and received adequate assistance from leaders to work as a group. However, Maple respondents generally were unsure or indicated that organizational commitment to the group and tasks was low. Time and lack of resources were noted at Maple as problems that might hinder the process.

All respondents from Poplar were confident that members of the SIT had the knowledge and skill as well as ample opportunities to learn to be effective. Maple respondents generally were unsure about this. Although training was available and provided at both sites, respondents reported that administrators usually determined training topics. Further, training was reported to be a high priority for the district at both sites. Maple respondents did not indicate that training at the building level had a high priority, but the opposite was true of Poplar respondents. Although all respondents indicated that all members of the SIT were valued, many respondents at both schools indicated that the leadership favored some members over others and that not all members shared responsibility equally.

Respondents from both schools indicated that meetings were held regularly, the SIT leadership coordinated deadlines and decrees, and members had ample opportunity to share their expertise. However, respondents from each school indicated that they had no input into how the budget was spent and did not know whether a budget even existed. Respondents from Poplar indicated that the SIT had access to data and forecasts, determined how the data were interpreted, and had full authority to plan and implement school improvement strategies based on that information, as long as they met district goals and objectives. Maple respondents were not sure they had full access to data but strongly indicated that district goals and objectives had a high priority. Several

comments added to the surveys explained this as an acceptance of the district curriculum department's ability to recommend appropriate strategies based on that department's analysis of the data. Respondents from both schools indicated agreement with and acceptance of district goals.

Respondents from both schools also indicated that they felt no pressure from administrators or the district to implement ideas that had originated outside of the group. Although numerous survey responses indicated that goals and assessments were district driven, strategy development seemed to be owned and accepted by both teams as means to assess and accomplish district-mandated goals.

Respondents from both schools indicated that they were sure that the plans and strategies they developed were effective. Those from Poplar said they received adequate assistance and resources to complete the process of school improvement, as well as to carry out the day-to-day operations of the school. Maple SIT members generally were unsure or did not think that the team received organizational assistance in avoiding flawed strategies or developing new ways to work. Time and resources to complete the task were major concerns for both groups.

Mr. James, the principal of Poplar Middle School, and Mr. Stelmack, the principal of Maple Middle School, both were experienced educators. Both men had several years' experience teaching at the elementary and middle school levels, and had been school administrators for at least 10 years. Both principals stated that they were very clear about the purpose and tasks of the SIT and believed the purpose was to increase student achievement. Mr. Stelmack added that another purpose was to build organizational commitment and community within the building. Mr. James was candid in stating that process should not become the school's product and indicated that, technically, his school

met all state compliance issues without investing a lot of time and resources in the mandated process. Mr. Stelmack was not that adamant about process being a problem. He said he was committed to the process because

> I believe that process builds commitment and commitment builds culture. If we view the school improvement process as a means to increase student achievement, then it will become a part of our everyday culture with our staff. School improvement must become a day-to-day way of operating and not a task to complete because the government requires it. (Personal interview, June 7, 2001)

Mr. James also spoke of process, mentioning several times that the required process of school improvement easily can become the product. He asserted, "If there is a battle I fight with my staff, it is around that concept. We do school improvement because we want students to achieve better. Some faculty still believe that school improvement is a waste of time. We want to believe it is a way of life at Poplar" (personal interview, March 14, 2001).

Both Poplar and Maple were in year three of the five-year NCA plan, so no new goals for the next year had been developed, and objectives and strategies had not been formally completed or submitted for the new cycle. Both principals maintained that their districts expected each school to align its taught curriculum with the state standards and benchmarks and to have assessment drive instruction. Therefore, they asserted, they were never without goals. These principals perceived that faculty tolerated the school improvement process.

The two principals voiced frustration that their teams seemed unaware of the time and money their districts invested in the school improvement process in their schools. Mr. Stelmack added, "I fear they see no connection with the building efforts and the district efforts" (personal interview, June 7, 2001). Each principal discussed time, money, internal communication, and additional resources as impediments to school

improvement initiatives. They reported that the only person in their respective districts who was held accountable for compliance with school improvement mandates was the building principal. They also said that teachers in their buildings generally viewed school improvement work, both research and planning, as extra duty and, in the case of NCA, as an edict from central office. Both schools operated in a district where the curriculum was determined by central office. Finally, Mr. Stelmack concluded, "We try to help all groups understand each other's perspectives, but this is nearly impossible. So we complete the paperwork, meet the published guidelines, and move on to another year, hoping that student achievement will get better. And it does" (personal interview, June 7, 2001).

Observations and Patterns

The school improvement process and student achievement seemed to be emphasized at both Poplar and Maple. Both SITs dedicated time, resources, and effort toward meeting their stated primary goal, increasing student achievement, while still devoting effort to reporting and documenting the goals of the state-mandated school improvement process. In each case, the teams possessed the compliance records required for the state. Viewing the findings through the lens of process criteria for effectiveness, I concluded that the teams appeared to meet most criteria; thus, I labeled them somewhat effective. Although I observed and recorded some anxiety and frustration at these schools, it was not as much as at the other four schools in the study. Several statements, conversations, and survey-related data indicated that school improvement was an accepted way of doing business at these schools. All effort was focused on one area, student achievement. I observed several examples of the teams' having real authority to

150

either plan or implement change within their buildings as long as the change matched centralized goals identified for the district.

There was evidence that increased student achievement was considered a primary goal by both teams and the schools' principals. The NCA steering committees at the two schools were the primary determiners and drivers of the process. Some resentment was expressed about the specific reporting and compliance tasks that each team was required to complete, but minimum effort and time were devoted to these compliance issues. In improvement strategies developed at each of these schools, student achievement was considered a first priority. If a goal or strategy was developed but existing contracts or procedures hindered its implementation, the building administrators either directly or indirectly negotiated with the parties to find a way to support the SIT's decision to implement the identified strategy. Although neither team had the authority to evaluate or require staff to implement any adopted strategy for improvement, these teams seemed able to involve all stakeholders in rallying around their focal goal of increased student achievement.

Time and resources were identified as large problems for these teams. No training in team effectiveness strategies was given, but both principals perceived a need for adult training for effectiveness. Each expressed some knowledge of organizational behavior, organizational development, or human resources principles and considered these concepts, as they related to school culture, important aspects of change or reform. Each principal viewed the process as a tool to complete school planning, rather than product. Examples of professional development for teachers to address student achievement problems were many and varied at both sites.

District goals existed for both schools, and each team stressed that adherence to those goals was crucial and mandatory. The teams recognized that the district goals were exactly what the goals should be because each district goal was a result of detailed assessment and measurement. Each school site devoted much of its resources to fine-tuning the building assessments to develop strategies and goals to increase student achievement.

Key Points

1. Both teams provided evidence that the process guided the product, increased student achievement, and that using the process while consciously abandoning many compliance issues allowed more attention and effort to be devoted to student achievement initiatives.

2. Lack of time and resources were major impediments to the process.

3. Many participants from both schools saw no connection between the mandated compliance requirements and school improvement initiatives designed to increase student achievement.

4. Both teams viewed school improvement as internally accepted and a way of operating on a daily basis.

5. Each team viewed assessment as the key to determining objectives and strategies to ensure increased student achievement.

6. Each team was confident that the strategies in place were effective and working; this confidence was based on readily available data.

7. Student achievement was the overall goal at both schools, as stated in their SIPs and observed during the field visits.

8. Each school had aligned its plans and initiatives with the state's standards and benchmarks.

9. The central office, superintendent, and board heavily influenced the goals of each school.

10. The NCA process and NCA steering committee guided reporting and compliance issues, but reports and compliance were identified as secondary to efforts to increase student achievement.

11. Both principals were active leaders of the process in their respective buildings.

Conclusion

Several patterns and observations were recorded with regard to SITs, using both compliance standards and team effectiveness criteria. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the effective teams lens was used as a tool in order to codify process, including compliance issues as being part of that process. I used the terms *effective, somewhat effective,* and *noneffective* to describe the observed teams according to the attributes they evidenced. The terms do not refer to the schools' ability to teach children. No attempt was made to draw conclusions about causality in this cross-case analysis. However, causality may be suggested in the following discussion of the nine identified themes and patterns and is explored further in Chapter VI.

Themes and Patterns

Student Achievement

Student achievement was not necessarily a goal of most of the SITs included in this research. Evidence collected through surveys, documents, observations, and

interviews suggested that the SITs viewed the school improvement process as one designed primarily to meet state and district compliance requirements rather than one designed to increase student achievement. Although student achievement goals were listed for all schools in the study, teams' work and effort seemed to be devoted to achieving structural compliance for published documents. The evidence overwhelmingly suggested that many teams devoted the majority of their resources to meeting the requirements of the process. Compliance issues became the product in four SITs, not student achievement as should be expected. This is not a new finding. As McGonagill (as cited in Schmoker, 1999) stated, "The annual goal statements that emerge from school improvement efforts are rarely linked to student achievement, and they seldom challenge the basic elements of practice" (p. 1). However, two schools seemed to consciously abandon formalizing the compliance requirements, demoting these goals to clerical status and focusing most effort on assessing, planning, and implementing student achievement initiatives outside the formal school improvement process.

Process

SITs designated as either effective or noneffective seemed more concerned with the process of school improvement than with the product, student achievement. Principals and SIT members in those schools were concerned primarily with completing the process and mandated reporting documents rather than with student achievement. In contrast, the somewhat effective teams, although cognizant of the process, devoted their resources primarily to student achievement activities following designated goals determined by a central office. The literature corroborated this finding, saying that the average school still "puts its faith in process, not in results" (Fiske, 1992, p. 116). It seems that schools want to be accountable just for the process and procedures of school

154

improvement, and not necessarily student results (Bullard & Taylor, 1993). The two somewhat effective schools in this research placed their emphasis on results and not process, matching Brigham's (1994) assertion that successful organizations are concerned with processes only so far as these processes affect results.

Conflict

In all six schools studied, the school improvement process seemed to be more a source of division and conflict than a means to unite school stakeholders in determining strategies for student achievement. All formal educators involved with the studied teams indicated frustration with the process. Many described the meetings as time consuming and unnecessary. Little (1987) made a similar observation, describing site-based meetings as unproductive. Little also cited teachers' resentment of a loss of time for lesson planning and instruction. The same was true in this study; educators asserted that school improvement tasks took time and resources away from teaching. Schmoker (1999) stated that this resentment or frustration on the part of educators was warranted. "Much of what we call teamwork or collegiality does not favor nor make explicit what should be its end: better results for children. The unfortunate reality is that most of what goes on in the name of collegiality is ineffective or counterproductive" (p. 15).

Assessments

Goals and teams existed in all six school studied, but in only two schools were the goals supported by assessment-based objectives and strategies aimed at increasing student achievement. There was little evidence that either the effective or the noneffective teams measured the results of their stated interventions. Not one of these four teams was sure that its school improvement process was effective. However, the

somewhat effective teams were sure that their interventions worked. Those teams used assessment to drive their planning. In other words, they measured what they were earnestly trying to achieve. "In this era of heightened interest in school reform, we have yet to realize that organizations typically get what they earnestly and specifically set out to get. Good faith efforts to establish goals and then to collectively and regularly monitor and adjust actions toward them produce results" (Schmoker, 1999, p. 2).

A Tie Between Teamwork and Goals

All teams operated with goals that were basically provided by their home district and/or central office. The school's task was to develop building goals, objectives, and strategies to match the district focus. However, observations from this study indicated that formal goals could exist in an organization, but when goals were not matched with effective teamwork, improvement initiatives suffered. This goal-oriented teamwork was lacking in most of the schools in this case study. Members of the effective and noneffective teams did not seem to internalize the goals; the goals were not their own. Participants' statements and actions suggested that they resented the goals. What passed for goals in the buildings were really complex objectives that were responses to goals established outside the buildings and the teams. Some internalization of the building goals was observed in the somewhat effective school teams. In the surveys and interviews, members stated that the district goals were their goals and that their assessments validated their existence. Researchers have found that school organizations are unique among formal organizations for just this reason, for without internal acceptance of a goal, consensus, progress, and success are limited (Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1991).

Training

There was virtually no evidence of SITs in the study requesting or receiving training on how to be a better team. Principals especially expressed confusion about their human resources efforts and knowledge of organizational development and organizational behavior. None indicated that training for teams or individuals would be necessary. However, the two principals in the somewhat effective teams, both with organizational-behavior backgrounds, did do some training accidentally. Their roles seemed to provide some structural conditions that enhanced process effectiveness in their schools. Survey responses from all schools were contradictory with regard to this issue. Nearly all respondents ranked themselves as highly trained and/or effective in areas of teamwork, but most were not sure about their colleagues' abilities. All reported training focused primarily on strategies for completing the mandates for school improvement. Except at the two effective schools, no time or stipends were provided to team members to work on the school improvement process. Virtually all of the time devoted to the process was either voluntary or contractually required. This is not a new finding in the area of school improvement. Interactions in the educational system are severely limited by space and time. Tasks are therefore limited as well because educators have few opportunities to interact with one another (Little, 1990). School organizations also seem to minimize the number of activities in which educators need to interact in a collective and collegial manner (Donahoe, 1993).

Lack of Key Connections

Except at the two somewhat effective schools, almost all of the objectives and strategies adopted by the SITs in this study dealt with adults and structural changes in the organization. Student achievement and improvement, although important in the

157

noneffective schools and a high priority in the somewhat effective schools, seemed not to drive any reasonably identifiable strategies. Various innovative programs and training initiatives were proposed, but few implementations were observed. An example would be training for personnel in new standards, teaching methodology, and innovative programs at one school. Yet the same school provided no training or emphasis on how students could apply effective writing in social studies, investigative skills in science, research with a historical perspective, or advanced mathematical operations, the student goals identified in that school's published SIP. Similar examples existed in all of the schools studied. The main problem seemed to be that individuals in the schools were pressured on several fronts to accomplish myriad tasks that seemed to have no real connection with students. This problem is not new. Rather, the problem with educational systems' innovation and policy making is that they are basically overloaded and fragmented in their approaches to school improvement (Fullan, 1999).

Focus

Schools that placed a priority on gathering data that would be shared with the team and organization to improve instruction and student achievement reported higher student achievement indicators than schools that did not have such a priority. Caution is advised in interpreting this finding, however. In the schools in this study, achievement scores were used primarily as a measure of student achievement for a SIT. I acknowledge that there are many other indicators that should be reviewed. Test achievement indicators were used in this study simply to identify one small area of concern for all SITs because the schools these teams represented were judged primarily on achievement scores as they were used for accreditation and public review. No causality is being implied. Only two schools in this study included in their school

158

improvement initiatives, whether to meet state mandates or not, teamwork, goal setting, and data use focused on student achievement, as measured solely by test scores. They seemed to understand what Schmoker (1999) found in his research: "People accomplish more together than in isolation; regular, collective dialogue about an agreed-upon focus sustains commitment and feeds purpose; effort thrives on concrete evidence of progress; and teachers learn best from other teachers" (p. 55).

Lack of Time and Resources

All six teams in the study cited lack of time and resources as major impediments to school improvement. Throughout the educational system, interactions are severely limited due to constraints on space and time. When resources are withheld or are not available, school improvement work becomes onerous and an added duty for team members. The results from this study indicated that there simply is not enough time, money, or training resources to accomplish the mandated school improvement tasks. This finding has been well documented in the literature. School improvement and site-based tasks, when deprived of time and resources, are severely limited because of the lack of interaction available to educators (Little, 1990).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

My primary purpose in this study was to describe the functioning of SITs and to determine the extent to which these teams evidenced effective organizational principles for groups as they planned and implemented strategies for school improvement. A secondary purpose was to discover the extent to which the teams in the schools included in this study differed with regard to team effectiveness. In this qualitative study, I sought answers to several questions as I set out to describe the behaviors of six SITs as well as the external conditions that influenced the school districts in which these teams operated. It was important to discover and describe the complex interrelationships that existed between and among SIT participants. Of equal importance was discovering and describing the relationships that existed between the participants as a group (the SIT) and the organization they represented, as both worked together within existing school frameworks (Cuba, 1993).

I sought to understand what SITs were called upon to do and how the literature and current thinking concerning team effectiveness applied to the six teams. The SITs appeared to be configured similarly, but evidence suggested that they all varied in operation and effectiveness. I examined the attention SIT members gave to effective team functioning, as well as the extent to which leaders of those teams were interested in directing the groups' actions rather than working to create conditions that supported group effectiveness.

In this study, I identified factors that assisted and those that impeded the school improvement process in six Michigan middle schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement. An overarching conceptual framework was used to develop a theoretical perspective that eventually led to the creation of a theoretical lens that helped me make sense of what was going on in the cases. To understand the relationship between organizational behaviors and school reform and change, I drew on the tenets presented by Hackman's (1990) process criteria for groups and writings on school reform and change (Cotton, 1992; Cuban, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Little, 1990). Situating this dynamic relationship within a deeper understanding of team effectiveness and organizational change brought me to Hackman's process criteria of effectiveness and eventually to research concerning results-based accountability in school reform (Hargreaves, 1997; Schmoker, 1999).

Conclusions

Research Questions

Past experiences, personal observations, and an in-depth review of the literature led me to hypothesize that school improvement may be related to the effectiveness of SITs. In this study I did not set out to discover any causal relationships between team effectiveness and school improvement. But in an attempt to understand team effectiveness, I did undertake to describe the functioning of SITs as they worked to increase student achievement and meet state compliance requirements. I attempted to detect, through literal replication, similar school improvement processes and results in the schools and to find, through theoretical replication, contrasting results but for predictable reasons. Both literal and theoretical replications that occurred in this study provided selective descriptions of SITs that allowed me to develop several themes. The themes,

161

arranged by patterns and pattern matching, did not prove causal relations, but they did suggest them.

My initial research question was: How does the functioning of SITs, assessed in terms of organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness criteria, differ in schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement? Although the results were ambiguous at times, they clearly indicated several patterns that allowed rich interpretations to take form. I was able to code and categorize the schools according to selected criteria and hence to compare and contrast observable phenomena.

I classified the six SITs studied according to three levels of effectiveness: effective, somewhat effective, and noneffective. The classification resulted from my coding of the schools in a team-effectiveness matrix and compliance table that I developed using Hackman's (1990) process criteria for effectiveness as a lens. As cautioned earlier in this study, the initial coding and labeling of the schools was not a literal coding because no attention was given to overall student achievement. Therefore, the labels given to the schools could just as easily have been groups A, B, and C. Effectiveness or noneffectiveness ratings related specifically to criteria for effective teams as cited in the organizational behavior and organizational development literature and served as descriptors for groupings as I identified themes and patterns. Implications with regard to process effectiveness and product effectiveness as these related to overall SIT effectiveness were not taken into consideration at that time.

All teams, regardless of how they were coded, were called upon to complete essentially the same tasks. Teams were formed to comply with both state- and NCA-mandated process criteria and also to increase student achievement. The compliance

criteria specified SIT meeting protocols; specific document-completion processes; research requirements; goal, objective, and strategy development; and team publication requirements. Both the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and NCA have characterized the compliance process as an effective template for bringing about school improvement. If followed correctly, the mandated school improvement process is assumed to be a means of providing effective planning for instruction initiatives, which theoretically would result in increased student achievement.

All schools in the study were evaluated annually by their local school district, regional NCA visiting team, and MDE as to whether the schools, through their SITs, met the compliance criteria. If these criteria were not met, sanctions from all these groups were implied. Only compliance requirements were assessed. These organizations did not assess student achievement as strictly as they did the compliance criteria, and only two schools in the study had developed internal student assessment criteria that they used on a regular basis.

Current thinking concerning team effectiveness, as well as writings on the topic in the literature on organizational development, organizational behavior, and school reform, complement these findings. However, SITs are unique teams or work groups in organizations for a number of reasons. Teams and work groups in industry and business usually are formed or created to assist the parent organization in specific ways. The groups' roles, purpose, autonomy, and authority are outlined as soon as they are formed. Time, resources, and training usually are provided. The organizations forming the groups usually have done so because of a specific diagnosed organizational development need.

SITs are formed, not by the organization's—the school district's—choice but by governmental mandate. The SIT is formally charged with assessing the school's

organizational need, developing an improvement plan, and implementing a final outcome for the school, increased student achievement. SITs rarely are given any power, resources, or time to complete their tasks. In addition, the SITs in this research were given district-created goals to follow.

A possible anomaly exists in that SITs may be different from teams and work groups described in the organizational development and organizational behavior literature. Whereas teams in other organizations exist to address specific immediate needs, the SIT is designated to be a de facto governing unit in a school. This it cannot be, as evidenced by the teams described in this study. SITs differ from teams found in other organizations. The school reform literature has described this paradox, and most researchers have concurred that SBM and SIT leadership usually have not effected the change initially hoped for through legislated mandates, due to the teams' limited power and authority (Cotton, 1990; Lindquist & Mauriel, 1989; Mitchell, 1990; Mojkowski & Fleming, 1988; Williams & Newcombe, 1994).

The SITs in this study appeared to be configured similarly, but they were not. The teams' effectiveness, as defined in this study, also varied. The teams labeled effective used highly formalized committees to guide the process. Teams labeled somewhat effective were formalized groups, but they actively completed the SIP collegially with the stakeholders, primarily teachers, in the school. A formal steering committee adopted the plan, following the large-group work. The noneffective teams also had a formal team identified, but this team provided little or no influence because faculty drove the process and administrators completed most of the compliance reporting.

Regardless of whether a formal subgroup, such as an NCA steering committee, ran the process or the process was run by the entire faculty, some teams in the study

evidenced similarities. First, all teams were provided with district goals to meet. Individual building goals developed by the teams became hybridized objectives to meet the district goals.

In this study, effectiveness as it pertains to teams in an organizational sense was determined in a narrow way. Teams that were labeled effective were able to complete the process and all compliance requirements. There was a sense of teamwork and examples of productive planning, but there also was noticeable uncertainty among team members as to whether the team was viable. Noneffective teams displayed division, frustration, and distrust; their compliance may have met the letter of the mandates, but certainly not the spirit. However, these teams espoused a devotion to student achievement, a goal not witnessed in the teams labeled effective. Thus, a second similarity is that neither the effective nor the noneffective teams linked the school improvement process to student achievement issues. A matter of goal displacement occurred, in that compliance reporting and not student achievement became the product of the team.

The teams labeled somewhat effective espoused student achievement as their goal and used student assessment to guide the development of their objectives and strategies, a feature not observed in teams categorized as effective or noneffective. Although members of the somewhat effective teams indicated on the survey that they did not connect the school improvement process to student achievement initiatives, the principals in these two schools maintained otherwise.

I did not discover or observe that any of the SITs gave attention to developing qualities of effective team functioning. Survey responses indicated that individuals on the teams were confident that they possessed a high level of ability to work on teams. However, a large number of respondents from each school were not sure that their

colleagues possessed the same attributes. Respondents continually cited lack of time and resources as major impediments to school improvement work, and spending additional time and money for team effectiveness training was viewed as another drain on already constrained resources. All six schools' team members resented the time they spent developing school improvement strategies, time that could have been used in their daily teaching of students.

Principals in general saw no need for group training in team effectiveness. However, they expressed frustration with their inability to obtain training time for instructional issues. Also, participants from all schools resented the fact that the school improvement process robbed valuable resources from pursuing the organizations' perceived core mission, teaching and learning. Training in activities not viewed as being related to teaching and learning was deemed unimportant.

Leaders of SITs generally were more interested in directing the groups' actions than in creating conditions that supported group effectiveness. Principals especially reported pressure and concern about meeting all compliance issues pertaining to the school improvement process. Principals stated that they, and not their teams, were ultimately responsible for the development of the annual SIP. Therefore, group direction was a primary concern for all principals.

However, the principals of the teams labeled somewhat effective appeared to consciously abandon many of the group-process requirements outlined in the compliance mandates. Each assumed responsibility for the required documentation, and each allotted time and resources for staff to get together and work on student assessment and achievement. Thus, the teams in these schools were relieved of administrative and clerical duties. Assessments and plans for student achievement were set as primary goals

for these teams; the school improvement and compliance requirements were secondary considerations.

Confirmation and Discrepancies

The data gathered in this study did not lead to a conclusive answer to the initial research question. That question addressed how the functioning of SITs, assessed in terms of organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness criteria, differed in schools with similar demographics but varying levels of student achievement. I assumed that SITs' effectiveness could be identified and described using the criteria gained from research on organizational development, organizational behavior, and team effectiveness. I also assumed that SITs would be similar due to the stringent governmental compliance standards that apply to them. They were not.

Somewhat ambiguous results began to accumulate, primarily due to variations in how the individual schools and teams defined or interpreted school improvement. Teams that viewed the process as the ultimate product, those teams labeled effective, although they were frustrated with the effort, generally exhibited positive team attributes and viewed attainment of compliance as validation that their team efforts were effective. Because attaining compliance was the goal of these teams, they would be viewed as effective and as a literal replication of the theory adopted and developed for this study. This would be despite the fact that these teams saw no relationship between the process and student achievement but chose instead to view the two objectives as separate and distinct.

Teams that viewed the process as a major hindrance to improving student achievement, those teams labeled noneffective, exhibited negative team attributes. They, too, viewed attaining compliance as the goal of school improvement. However, they

resented losing time and resources in attaining compliance and therefore viewed it as an impediment to increasing student achievement. The teamwork on these SITs resembled reluctant compliance with administrative directives. These schools represented a theoretical replication of the theory, one that resulted in a rating of noneffectiveness for predictable reasons.

Schools and teams that viewed the process as possibly being beneficial, the teams labeled somewhat effective, viewed neither compliance issues nor the school improvement process as goals. These teams viewed student achievement as their one and only goal. Because school norms reflected the primary goal of student achievement, the process and compliance requirements were tolerated as possible means to reach the goal. Although these teams were not categorized as effective because of their conscious minimization of compliance requirements, the teams' collegial attributes and leadership qualities corresponded with many of the theoretical replication themes of the research.

These findings presented me with a dilemma. Whereas SITs that displayed effective team attributes were completing processes, they did not seem to be trying to increase student achievement, which in the school reform literature is a criterion of school effectiveness. Schools that openly criticized the process because they thought it hindered efforts to increase student achievement exhibited divisiveness and tension in the workplace. Teams that accepted the compliance issues as a goal that was secondary to the main goal of increasing student achievement under the direction of their building principals seemed to exhibit more cordial work atmospheres.

I propose that discrepancies that occurred between what I originally anticipated and the actual findings were a result of using a theoretical lens that did not take into account that SITs as teams may need to be viewed differently from teams in other

organizations. What was evident in the school reform literature was not altogether apparent in the field, where compliance issues and student achievement planning and implementation seemed to be at cross-purposes with each other.

Implications

Introduction

The findings from this study illustrated that SITs are governmentally required subunits of an organization that influence schools in a variety of ways, both positive and negative. School districts will find that it is in the best interest of students, the community, and the district if a SIT operates in a setting that allows the team to accomplish its many objectives. In this study I identified that continual, consistent school improvement was primarily concerned with increasing student achievement. This should be the main objective of SITs.

I have described six SITs and the work they did. Although all of the teams were concerned with process and compliance issues, some focused primarily on student achievement. Many initiatives were observed in the schools these teams represented, but disjointed approaches to compliance mandates seemed to produce programs and efforts that appeared to be disassociated and unconnected. In reviewing results-based school reform, Schmoker (1999) referred to these collections of initiatives as "symbolic, high-profile 'initiatives du jour' occur[ring] in the near absence of any written or explicit intention to monitor, adjust, and thus palpably increase student learning and achievement" (p. 2). He concluded, "A combination of three concepts constitutes the foundation for results: meaningful, informed teamwork; clear measurable goals; and the regular collection and analysis of performance data" (p. 2).

169

So what do the results from this study say about the general process of school improvement? Appropriate generalizations follow as I explain six major implications that may be applied to SITs, school districts, educators, and legislators as mandated school improvement continues to be refined and defined.

Means and Ends

There is a need for SITs to link student achievement results, purposeful reform strategies, and the school improvement planning. Confusion exists in schools concerning the product of a SIT, a deep and debilitating confusion about how means relate to ends. Teams do not understand and accept that process, school improvement planning, leads to product, increased student achievement. This failure to link process to product is a unique characteristic of the teaching profession, and researchers have found that school organizations are unique among formal organizations for just this reason. Without internal acceptance of a correct goal, the chances of attaining consensus, progress, and success are limited (Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1991; Sizer, 1992). Schools are divided on the question of whether the goal of school improvement is to complete a mandated process or to increase student achievement.

Therefore, a need exists to connect planning, compliance, and student achievement in order to create a coherent and shared purpose within a school with regard to its school improvement planning. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) identified three main things that can assist in this endeavor. Specifically, a group in a school should examine student achievement data, develop plans to bring about results based on that information, and have the political knowledge and skill to implement their designs.

170

Purposeful Teamwork

There is a need to recognize and understand the relationship between accepted team development criteria, as described in organizational development and organizational principles, and fundamental educational goals as necessities, not afterthoughts, by all who engage in these efforts. The case-study schools all worked with goals that were essentially district goals. One task for the SIT was to develop building goals that would meet the needs of the building and not be at odds with the goals of the district. However, this study indicated that confusion existed on the teams concerning the primary task of a SIT. In general, the task of the SIT was seen to be primarily one of meeting compliance requirements, not effective teaming with a view toward increasing student achievement.

Building goals therefore became superficial, hybridized clones of district goals, goals that generally were not accepted or internalized by the faculties charged with meeting them. Feelings of apathy, anger, frustration, and general disregard for these goals were evident in this research. However, superficial acceptance of the goals was apparent as some schools used the same goals year after year. As Katzenbach and Smith (1993b) stated, "Far too many teams casually accept goals that are neither demanding, precise, realistic, nor actually held in common. . . . Teamwork alone never makes a team (p. 21).

The two SITs that demonstrated a primary commitment to gathering data that were then shared to improve instruction in their schools reported higher MEAP scores as indicators of student achievement than those that did not have such a commitment. These two teams, the teams labeled somewhat effective, included in their teamwork, whether meeting state mandates or not, teamwork skills, student achievement goal setting, and use of data.

171

Although these teams considered district goals, purposeful planning led by involved principals created an atmosphere in which these teams focused on goals that they themselves had developed. As Schmoker (1999) stated, "People accomplish more together than in isolation; regular, collective dialogue about an agreed-upon focus sustains commitment and feeds purpose; effort thrives on concrete evidence of progress; and teachers learn best from other teachers" (p. 55).

The implication is that SIT meetings need to focus primarily on student achievement. Teams need to recognize that, as subgroups of a large organization, their job is to enhance the organization as a whole. The somewhat effective teams did this through the use of accepted principles of organizational development and organizational behavior. Some training in teamwork was provided through principal interventions, but it was not identified as such. Team members worked cross-departmentally, not by choice but due to time constraints. Process was used to guide goal development, and communication was emphasized due to contractual requirements and procedures that had become norms in the building. Thus, the teams practiced some organizational development and organizational principles as they focused on student achievement, but no one recognized they were doing this.

Compliance Versus Results

There is a need to achieve a delicate balance between compliance requirements and principles of organizational development and organizational behavior in order to create conditions that support group effectiveness for SITs. School improvement as observed in this study was treated primarily as a compliance exercise rather than a team development endeavor. It was an extra duty to complete before teachers could eventually get back to teaching. It is necessary to enlighten educators that compliance issues and

student achievement concerns are unified and not separate entities. It needs to be acknowledged that people work more effectively, efficiently, and persistently when they work collectively, while gauging their efforts against results (Rosenholtz, 1991).

"A team's purpose and specific performance goals have a symbiotic relationship; each depends on the other to stay relevant and vital. The specific performance goals help a team track progress and hold itself accountable; the broader, even nobler aspirations in a team's purpose supply both meaning and emotional energy" (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993b, p. 55). Unfortunately, if the purpose of a SIT is simply to complete a compliance document, frustration and dissension will arise, which will hinder effective teamwork as described in the organizational development and organizational behavior literature.

School districts and state agencies need to recognize that offering a SIT an opportunity to work as a decentralized entity that has little authority within a centralized bureaucracy produces angry stakeholders who recognize their impotence. Elected school boards, superintendents, legislators, and governors still make decisions. These policy makers need to recognize that individual school building autonomy with no real authority is pointless; the only output under such circumstances will be specific building compliance documents that are, in essence, a secondary and not a primary goal of the team. Compliance issues become a seductive distraction for SITs. "Reform often fails because politics often favors symbols over substance. Substantial change in practice requires a lot of hard and clever work 'on the ground,' which is not the strong point of political players" (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 746).

Principal Leadership

There is a need for principals to lead school improvement efforts and bridge the gap between district goals and building goals, addressing all improvement efforts through

173

strategies designed to increase student achievement. Teams generally outperform individuals. Researchers have found that learning that occurs on teams is longer lasting and that the skills brought together on a team exceed those possessed by any individual (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993a). However, the SITs studied in this research did not put that concept into practice.

The two principals who exhibited pivotal leadership in the process effectively led their SITs, the ones labeled somewhat effective. Both principals were students of school improvement research, and they asserted that student achievement guided their personal views of effective school improvement planning. Although they were not cognizant of their strengths, each exhibited traits of enlightened leadership that the literature on organizational development and organizational behavior indicated enhance team effectiveness.

For instance, each principal worked well with the central office and superintendent. Each provided training to teams on effective practices in team development, not knowing he was doing so. Each espoused the belief that creating norms and changing culture were necessary for change. Each was focused on student achievement results that were based on assessments that drove the curriculum. Each minimized compliance reporting as a goal, relegating the task to clerical status. Finally, each was able to link or bridge his SIT to the district goals and guide stakeholders in accepting those goals.

Principals in the other schools took a secondary role in the process. These principals either looked to elected SIT chairpersons or total faculties to run the process in their schools. All of them viewed the central office and board as primary determiners of goals. They also viewed the school improvement process as a separate task, one that was

divorced from student achievement issues in their schools. Finally, none of the four principals provided organizational development, organizational behavior, or team effectiveness interventions for their team members.

The principals in the study also viewed the topic of results differently. All but the two principals at the somewhat effective schools relied primarily on test scores to measure results. The MEAP scores were their primary indicators of results. Although the other two principals also used these scores, they were used primarily to drive instruction and were combined with results from internally developed assessments. Great care was taken to guard against using scores from just one test to measure accountability. "Looking for results may even smack of the worst kind of accountability: an exclusive insistence on raising test scores" (Schmoker, 1999, p. 3).

Training Considerations

There is a need for training and staff development in principles of organizational development and organizational behavior, as well as team effectiveness. Although not seen as a priority by SIT members across the cases, team effectiveness training is needed. Virtually all respondents in the case-study schools were confident about their ability to work together, work on a team, work collectively toward a goal, and work to develop a plan. However, most respondents were not sure that their fellow team members possessed these same skills. There was also a general consensus within SITs that some team members exerted more influence and power than others did, and that leaders gave these individuals' views more weight than others' ideas.

Team members and leaders of SITs need training in recognizing the situations that can occur on a team and strategies for avoiding flawed practices that may hinder team effectiveness. Time and resources, coveted commodities in the school, were viewed as

too important to waste on this type of training. Survey and interview responses indicated that confusion existed regarding such training—confusion concerning overall goals and lost instruction time. Further, SIT members' general feeling of anger and frustration led them to resist any training program that seemed unrelated to increasing student achievement. However, teachers and other school staff did not have experience in working on a team. Such isolation is unique to the teaching profession and hence to the educational system as a whole (Lortie, 1975).

Time and Resources

There is a need for school organizations to provide time and resources to SITs, to assist them in completing the difficult tasks they have been assigned. SIT members overwhelmingly rejected the premise that rewards for either individuals or the group were prime incentives. The main need expressed by team members was for additional time and resources. Despite the time and resources devoted to this huge, widely adopted school improvement effort, no relationship between student learning and site-based management has been documented (Fullan, 1993). However, have enough time and resources been allocated thus far?

SIT members, especially teachers and principals, indicated that school improvement meetings and process development were unproductive; they resented the loss of time for lesson planning and instruction. This is not a new finding. The literature also referred to teachers' frustrations about and resentment of the process, which was seen as a drain on time and resources, especially when members were expected to participate voluntarily, on their own time (Little, 1987).

Thus, allocation of additional time and resources, as well as relief from current teaching duties, seems to be needed. Rewards will never be sufficient as long as team members view serving on a SIT as an extra duty in an already packed work schedule.

Suggestions for Further Research

Several themes and patterns emerged from this multiple-case study with cross-case analysis that provide a database rich in alternative avenues for future researchers to pursue. At the completion of this study, several questions remain unanswered. Can effective teamwork in SITs be enhanced and, if so, will that affect student achievement? Is it more important for principals to address the conditions that enhance team effectiveness than to manage a team's efforts to produce a certain product? Does providing additional time and resources to effective team planning ultimately play a role in enhancing student achievement? What part does student achievement play in describing an individual school's success?

To answer these questions, research on the role SITs play in increasing student achievement may need to have a more experimental and less descriptive design. Also, future researchers could use another methodological approach, examining the same phenomenon but attempting to identify causal relationships.

A similar study could be conducted with charter schools rather than public schools. Charter schools may be able to negotiate through initial charters with universities, permission to manipulate and measure compliance issues, and team effectiveness criteria without fear of sanctions from state departments of education, allowing for manipulation of variables in individual cases. Using this type of experimental research design might yield significant results that are relevant to team planning in public schools.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS FOR INFORMATION IN THE DATA PAGES

DEFINITIONS FOR INFORMATION IN THE DATA PAGES

1. **Free and Reduced Lunch** - This is the percentage of students who are eligible to participate in the school breakfast and/or lunch program at no cost or at a reduced cost. Eligibility is determined by applying federal guidelines through a review of a family's size and financial resources. PLEASE NOTE: Free and Reduced Lunch data reported in the MSR do not reflect any changes made by schools after December 30, 1998. PLEASE NOTE: If a building's data is blank, that building's data may have been combined with the data of the building that actually provides the meal service.

2. **K-12 Enrollment** - This is the number of pupils in the school district or attending an individual school in grades K-12. It includes alternative and special education pupils, but does not include adult education participants. District enrollments are taken from the audited fall state aid pupil membership counts in full-time equivalents (FTE) reported by the school districts. The Department does not collect FTE related to individual buildings so the enrollment for buildings is reported here by headcount. For the 1998-99 school year, there were 555 traditional public school districts in the state, 139 public school academies, and one university school. The total K-12 enrollment (headcount) in those schools was 1,684,253. On average there were about 2,400 students in each district. Some city districts were very large. On the other hand, 446 districts had fewer than 2,000 students.

3. **Pupil/Teacher Ratio** - This is the classroom ratio of pupils to teachers. It is calculated by dividing the K-12 (excluding special education) enrollment of a school by the number of K-12 classroom teachers reported by the school. The number of K-12 classroom teachers does not include teachers in special education, compensatory education, vocational education, other basic programs for example summer and enrichment classes and other added needs including migrant and bilingual education. Please check with your local school to learn the number of special teachers and support staff who are assisting with educating students in your district or building. PLEASE NOTE: The elementary school pupil/teacher ratios may be affected by the number of kindergarten teachers who are assigned to teach two classes; the pupil/teacher ratio may not be the same as the class size. PLEASE NOTE: FTE counts are used for the district level calculations and headcount figures are used for the building level calculations.

4. **Foundation Allowance Per Pupil** - This is the combination of state and local monies that each school district is allocated per pupil as calculated under Section 20 of the State School Aid Act. To calculate the average foundation grant for an ISD, multiply each of the ISD's constituent district's foundation grant by its pupil count, add the products together, and divide the sum by the total pupil count of the constituent districts. To calculate the average foundation grant at the state level, multiply each district's foundation grant by the district's pupil count, add the products together, and divide the sum by the total state pupil count.

5. **Current Operating Expenditures (COE) Per Pupil** - Spending numbers are provided for both the entire district and each individual building. These numbers are

in dollars per pupil to make it easier to compare districts and school buildings. The pupil count for this includes adult education participants because costs for those participants are included in the COE. District figures include district-wide activities such as instruction, transportation, operations and maintenance. Also included are food service operations reported in a district's school service fund. For comparability purposes, COE do not include capital outlay or community service expenditures which vary greatly from year to year. Because of that, COE cannot be subtracted from the total revenues defined below to determine the district's annual financial position. Building level expenditures include only instructional and school building administration costs. For that reason the total building level expenditures will not be the same as the total district level expenditures which include support services. More detailed information related to expenditures is available on the Department Web page. (See Bulletin 1011 Financial Data and Bulletin 1014: MI K-12 Financial Data & Ranking)

6. **Total Revenues Per Pupil** - This is the total amount of funds per pupil received by the school for use in general school operations and school food operations. The pupil count for this includes adult education participants because revenues for those participants are included in the Total Revenues. More detailed information related to revenues is available on the Department Web page. (See Bulletin 1011 Financial Data and Bulletin 1014: MI K-12 Financial Data & Ranking)

7. **Average Teacher Salary** - This represents the classroom teacher average salary. It is computed by dividing the total basic classroom teacher salaries reported by the school by the total number of basic classroom teachers (FTEs) reported by the school. This number does not reflect employee benefits. Salary levels vary widely around the state. They tend to be higher in metropolitan areas and lower in rural areas. Salaries also vary based on experience, training, and advanced degrees earned by individuals. More details regarding the experience, degrees, and training of staff are available from your intermediate school district. PLEASE NOTE: Several Public School Academies (PSAs) contract for certified teacher services. Therefore, no average teacher salary is calculated for those PSAs.

8. **Dropout Rate** - This number is an estimate of the percentage of students who left school and did not return during the following school year. The number applies to grades 9-12 only. This is a one-year rate. PLEASE NOTE: A negative dropout rate indicates that the data submitted by the district are incorrect. An "n/a" indicates data are not available or not applicable. An "n/d" indicates no data were submitted.

9. **Completion/Graduation Rate** - This number is an estimate of the percentage of 9th grade students who will complete their senior year of school and graduate. PLEASE NOTE: A completion/graduation rate greater than 100 percent indicates that the data submitted by the district are incorrect. An "n/a" indicates data are not available or not applicable. An "n/d" indicates no data were submitted.

10. **Testing:** The Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tested students in mathematics and reading at grades 4 and 7 and in science, writing, and social studies at grades 5 and 8 in the winter of 1999. During spring 1999, students in grade 11 took

the MEAP High School Test (HST) in mathematics, science, reading, writing, and social studies.

11. **Mathematics** - The MEAP mathematics tests are designed to measure essential mathematics skills in whole numbers and numeration; fractions, decimals, ratio, and percent; measurement; geometry; statistics and probability; algebraic ideas; and problem solving and logical reasoning. The HST in mathematics emphasizes real world applications and problems, and assesses four content areas: number, data analysis and probability, algebraic ideas, and geometry and measurement. This test asks students to answer multiple choice questions and also questions that require written responses.

12. **Reading** - The MEAP essential skills reading test measures children's reading performance based on how well meaning is gathered from what is read. The test contains two reading selections. One is a story and one is informational (such as a science or social studies selection). The HST in reading asks students to respond to a series of questions after reading three selections. Part I requires students to provide evidence of their understanding of the key concepts and ideas contained within each of the reading selections and across two or more of the reading selections. Part II, Response-to-the-Reading-Selections, asks students to read a short, lifelike situation related to key concepts and ideas contained in the reading selections, and then respond to a question by constructing a written response using evidence from the reading selections to support their responses.

13. **Science** - The MEAP and HST in science assess students' performance on five dimensions of scientific literacy: using life science, using physical science, using earth science, constructing scientific knowledge, and reflecting on scientific knowledge. The tests are based on scientific principles rather than details and definitions. These tests ask students to answer multiple choice questions and also questions that require a written response.

14. **Writing** - The MEAP and HST in writing assess each student's writing as a whole. All of the following aspects of writing are considered: ideas and content, organization; style (vocabulary, sentence structure, voice), and conventions of writing (grammar, usage, mechanics, spelling).

15. **Social Studies** - The social studies tests were administered in 1998-99 at grades 5, 8, and 11. Social Studies data are not available for the 1999 report. They will be in next year's version. PLEASE NOTE: The scores for the spring 1999 High School Tests are not included in this report. They are available at the following website location http://www.mde.state.mi.us/off/meap/1999results.shtml. An "n/a" indicates data are not available. An "n/d" indicates no data were submitted. An "n/c" indicates data are not comparable. Additional MEAP and High School Test (HST) information and results can be found in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) web pages.

16. **Schools of Choice Enrollment** - This number represents the number of pupils educated by the district under Section 105 of the State School Aid Act. (These are out-of-district pupils.

17. **Accreditation Status** - Schools become accredited by the State Board of Education when they have met a series of standards set by the state. The standards include (1) compliance with specific state laws regarding processes for high student achievement, (2) demonstration of high student achievement as measured by the MEAP, and (3) demonstration that other standards have been met. The accredited category includes schools that have received summary or interim status. This means that a school has met all of the standards or is making substantial progress toward that goal. An unaccredited school has a history of low student achievement and will be working closely with the Department of Education to improve the achievement of its students. KEY TO ACCREDITATION STATUS CODES: Some buildings house more than one level. In some cases, if there are multiple levels, there may be a different status for each level. The first letter in the code represents: E=elementary, M=middle, S=senior high. The second letter in the code represents: S=Summary, I=Interim, U=Unaccredited. No Status - A building could have no status if: (1) it is a new building and, therefore, does not have three consecutive years of MEAP scores; and/or (2) the building does not house grades tested by MEAP. Example: A school with both elementary and middle school levels might be shown as: E-S M-I which means the elementary level has a Summary status and the middle level has an Interim status. PLEASE NOTE: Accreditation status for high schools is based on 1994-95 data. Accreditation status for elementary schools and middle schools is based on 1997-98 data. http://www.mde.state.mi.us/gr/menubar.map http://www.mde.state.mi.us/gr/menubar.map

URL: http://www.state.mi.us/mde/reports/msr99/rptdef.htm Last updated October 1, 1999 at 1:40pm

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CRITERIA OF ACCEPTABILITY

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CRITERIA OF ACCEPTABILITY

The school improvement process includes a step-by-step way of defining problems, setting objectives, choosing strategies, preparing for implementation, designing evaluation and using data to modify and enhance future planning. The school improvement plan must address strategies and activities that are responsive to the identified needs of the students in the specific school building. Records and documents include the following items, which need the listed indicators for verification.

The Team
- Member list
- Meeting agendas, minutes and correspondence
- Training verification, on-site visits, schedules, individual documentation for all stakeholders

Plans
- Actual statements for goals, activities, timelines, individuals responsible, evaluation procedures, cost analysis and priority rankings
- Descriptions of the activities and timelines for developing the components of the plan

Mission Statement (must include)
- All students
- Equity/quality
- Staff ownership/responsibility
- Commitment to teaching and learning for all

Comprehensive Goals (that include)
- Cognitive, affective and school climate goals
- Observable/measurable student outcomes
- Goals 2000 and State Board Mandates
- Core curriculum for all students

Curriculum Alignment
- Articulation across all grade levels
- Articulation between core curriculum outcomes, instruction and assessment

Evaluation Processes (that include)
- Documented data
- The degree to which staff behavior and the organization has changed
- The degree to which student outcomes have been reached

Staff Development Plan
- Goals and activities of the SIP

- Job related indicators/standards for staff
- Specific measurable learning objectives
- Follow-up, support, practice and coaching

Building Level Decision Making
- Participation of staff in developing SIP and staff acceptance of its validity
- Staff consensus on priorities to be addressed
- Staff acceptance of responsibility for implementing the plan and a formal method of communicating progress on activities
- All involved are formally in accord with the decision to implement the SIP
- Administrative proof of money, time and other resources dedicated to implementation of the SIP
- Building level management support of SIP demonstrated through scheduling, time, space allotment, staff development and communications concerning the SIP

APPENDIX C

LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION, INFORMED CONSENT FORMS, DOCUMENT
REVIEW PROTOCOL, INTERVIEW PROTOCOL, AND SIT SURVEY

Letter of Introduction to Principals

Date

Principal's Name
School Name
Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. Principal,

My name is D. Jeff Pratt and I am a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University, studying with Dr. Stephen Kaagan. I am conducting a study of the functioning of school improvement teams and how they differ. I am writing to see if you will consent to be a part of this study and support my research. Any and all participation in this study is voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to discover how the functioning of school improvement teams differs in high and low achieving schools. I believe this type of inquiry will contribute to our knowledge as practitioners in school administration and may help to shape a role for both pre and post service training in educational administration.

There are several aspects to this study. I will survey your present School Improvement Team members and review your required reporting documents, which include your annual reports and school improvement plans for the past three years. I will also interview you concerning specific questions found on the school improvement team member survey. I foresee all this occurring with a minimum of intrusion over a one month span.

I will seek consent of the school improvement team members by letter, explaining my study and my desire for their participation. All participants are required to sign a consent form before participating and may withdraw at any time. I have enclosed for you the letters and consent forms, that I will use.

I have enclosed a consent form for you to read, sign and return (in the enclosed envelope) if you consent to participate. If you have any questions, please call me at work (517) 548-6238, home (810) 750-2963 or email me at prattdea@pilot.msu.edu.

Sincerely,

D. Jeff Pratt
Dr. Stephen Kaagan

Letter of Introduction to SIT Participants

Dear School Improvement Team Member,

My name is D. Jeff Pratt and I am a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University, studying with Dr. Stephen Kaagan. I am conducting a study of the functioning of school improvement teams and how they differ. I am writing to see if you will consent to be a part of this voluntary study by completing a survey and participate in an interview. You have been selected because you are now a member of this school's school improvement team.

The information provided through this survey will help me discover how the functioning of school improvement teams differ in high and low achieving schools. I believe this type of inquiry will contribute to our knowledge as practitioners in school administration and may help to shape a role for both pre and post service training for teachers and school administrators.

Your responses to this survey will be confidential and no individual will be identified with his or her responses. Your voluntary participation is very important to this project. The information you provide is important to the study, not only for completion of a Ph.D. program, but also for possible recommendations for practicing principals and principal candidates. Completing this survey should require no more then twenty minutes and the interview no more then one hour.

I appreciate you taking the time to participate very much and thank you for your interest. I have enclosed a consent form for you to read, sign and return (in the enclosed envelope) if you consent to participate. If you have any questions, please call me at work (517) 548-6238 home (810) 750-2963 or email me at prattdea@pilot.msu.edu.

Sincerely,

D. Jeff Pratt
Dr. Stephen Kaagan

Administrator Informed Consent Form

Study of School Improvement Team Functioning

The administrator and school improvement team members are participating in a voluntary study exploring the functioning of school improvement teams and how they differ. It is estimated that your total participation in this study will require three hours over a six week time period.

You have received and read the letter from D. Jeff Pratt dated, _____, which briefly describes the purposes and procedures of the research. The letter includes his name, address and methods of communications in case you have questions or concerns regarding the study.

The researcher will request administrators and school improvement team members to complete a survey. The researcher will request an interview with you and the school improvement team which will be recorded in field notes and audiotape. A follow-up interview may be necessary in order to clarify information that may be gathered at the first interview. If available, the researcher will collect and review public school improvement documents that include the school improvement plans and annual reports for the past three years.

The researcher will analyze all the data collected. He will write and speak about the research to scholarly audiences, including teachers and professors. All identities will remain confidential in any published reports of the findings of the study. All interviews, survey data and documents will be held in the strictest confidence and your identity will not be disclosed in any form during the preparation or completion of this study. The researcher will observe precautions in how he stores and handles the tapes, surveys and documents in order to protect your privacy. When he reports the study, it will be for research or teaching purposes and he will include in those reports only limited examples of interviews or observations protected by pseudonyms.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. **At any time during the study, you may refuse to provide information or discontinue your participation without giving a reason and with no negative consequences.** If you have concerns about your role as a research subject, you may contact David Wright, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. His contact information is below.

You agree to support this study in the manner described above.

Administrator Signature: _____
School Name: _____
Date: _____

D. Jeff Pratt
9175 Apple Orchard
Fenton, MI 48430
(810) 750-2963
prattdea@pilot.msu.edu

Committee Chair
Dr. Stephen Kaagan
Michigan State University
425 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 355-1833
(517) 353-6393 – FAX
Skaagan@msu.edu

UCRIHS
David E.Wright, Ph.D., Chair
Michigan State University
246 Administration Building
East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 355-2180
(517) 353-2976 -- FAX
Ucrihs@pilot.msu.edu

School Improvement Team Member Consent Form

Study of School Improvement Team Functioning

The administrator and school improvement team members will be participating in a study exploring how the functioning of school improvement teams differ. It is estimated that your total participation in this study will require two hours.

You have received and read the letter from D. Jeff Pratt dated _____, which briefly describes the purposes and procedures of the research. The letter includes his name, address and methods of communications in case you have questions or concerns regarding this voluntary study.

The researcher will request administrators and school improvement team members to complete a survey. The researcher will request an interview with the school improvement team that will be recorded in field notes and audiotape. If available, the researcher will collect and review public school improvement documents that include the school improvement plans and annual reports for the past three years.

The researcher will analyze all the data collected. He will write and speak about the research to scholarly audiences, including teachers and professors. All identities will remain confidential in any published reports of the findings of the study. All survey data and documents will be held in the strictest confidence and your identity will not be disclosed in any form during the preparation or completion of this study. The researcher will observe precautions in how he stores and handles the surveys and documents in order to protect your privacy. When he reports the study, it will be for research or teaching purposes and he will include in those reports only limited examples protected by pseudonyms.

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. **At any time during the study, you may refuse to provide information or discontinue your participation without giving a reason and with no negative consequences.** If you have concerns about your role as a research subject, you may contact David Wright, Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. His contact information is below.

You agree to support this study in the manner described above.

School Improvement Team Member Signature: _____
School Name: _____
Date: _____

D.Jeff Pratt	Committee Chair	UCRIHS
9175 Apple Orchard	Dr. Stephen Kaagan	David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair
Fenton, MI 48430	Michigan State University	Michigan State University
(810) 750-2963	425 Erickson Hall	246 Administration Building
prattdea@pilot.msu.edu	East Lansing, MI 48824	East Lansing, MI 48824
	(517) 355-1833	(517) 355-2180
	(517) 353-6393 – FAX	(517) 353-2976 - FAX
	Skaagan@msu.edu	Ucrihs@pilot.msu.edu

Document Review Protocol

All documents that will be reviewed are designated as public record and can be requested by any citizen. In addition, the mandates require that these documents be ready and available for review by state regulatory agencies or citizen request. Therefore, no letter of consent or request is necessary for the purposes of this research.

Interview Protocol

Interview questions were the same as those listed in the survey found in this appendix. The purpose of asking these same questions was to develop a richer understanding and description of each SIT member's individual beliefs as they pertain to key components of the team effectiveness criteria found in the literature.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM MEMBER SURVEY

Code # _____

Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

SECTION 1

1. The task of the SIT is very clear to me.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

2. I am very aware of the purpose of the SIT.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

3. The work I do on the SIT is very meaningful to me.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

4. All members of the SIT share the responsibilities of the team through equal participation and equal effort.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

5. The SIT is primarily held accountable for its performance and not individual members.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

6. The individuals on the SIT are primarily held accountable for the team's performance and not the SIT as a group.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

7. I feel confident that I have sufficient knowledge and skills to be a contributing member of the

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

   SIT.

8. I have ample opportunities to learn as an individual on the SIT in order to become a more effective member of the SIT.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

9. The team has ample opportunities to learn as a group in order to be a more effective team.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

10. I feel our SIT is effectively designing and implementing task appropriate strategies.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

11. I feel that the task strategies designed and implemented are effective.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

SECTION II.

12. Our SIT is well staffed in regard to an appropriate number of members to complete expected tasks.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

13. Team members have the expertise to perform the expected tasks of the SIT.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

14. The SIT represents all stakeholders of the school.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

15. The team members on our SIT work well together.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

(Please continue to the next page)

16. The team members on the SIT have sufficient interpersonal skills to work and function as a team.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

17. I believe that the SIT is very important to the school and I am motivated to do well because of this.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

18. The SIT as a group is motivated to do well.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

19. Meetings of the SIT are held regularly and follow a specific agenda.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

20. Generally speaking, only a few members of the group make all the decisions.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

21. The SIT can generally work through conflict and reach a consensus on issues.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

SECTION III.

22. There are both tangible and intangible rewards for SIT members.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

23. Generally speaking, rewards based upon individual performance serve as incentives.

   O strongly agree
   O agree
   O not sure
   O disagree
   O strongly disagree

(Please continue to the next page)

24. Generally speaking, rewards
based upon group performance
serve as incentives to the group.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure ·
() disagree
O strongly disagree

25. Training and technical assistance
are provided to members of the
team on a regular basis to
enhance the effectiveness of the
SIT.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

26. Training and technical assistance
are usually determined as a result
of the team's initiative.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

27. Administrators usually determine
training and assistance.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

28. Training and assistance for the
SIT is a high priority in your
organization.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

29. The SIT has access to data and
forecasts to determine
appropriate tasks and strategies.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

30. Data is primarily gathered and
interpreted by the SIT and
forecasts generated by the SIT.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

31. Data and forecasts are provided
to the SIT from administration
leaving little room for SIT
interpretation.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
() disagree
O strongly disagree

(Please continue to the next page)

198

SECTION IV.

32. The SIT leadership provides assistance to the team in regard to working interdependently as a group.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

33. The SIT leadership assists in coordinating deadlines and decreements.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

34. SIT members and leaders devote time to building commitment within the team.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

35. The SIT leadership recognizes and is able to avoid inappropriate weighting given to selected individuals.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

36. Team members can share individual expertise with other team members on a regular basis.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

37. The SIT operates with set resources such as a budget to implement strategies and provide time to team members to meet.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

38. The SIT manages and determines how its budget is allocated.

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

39. The SIT receives assistance avoiding flawed implementation strategies for goals and

    O strongly agree
    O agree
    O not sure
    O disagree
    O strongly disagree

    objectives being studied.

(Please continue to the next page)

199

40. The SIT receives assistance developing new ways of proceeding with its work.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
O disagree
O strongly disagree

41. The SIT receives assistance that supports and enhances conditions for the group to operate.

O strongly agree
O agree
O not sure
O disagree
O strongly disagree

SECTION V.

42. How often do you view the SIT as a group that provides ample effort to complete the tasks is assigned?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

43. How often do you view the SIT as a group that has sufficient knowledge and skill to complete the tasks it is assigned?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

44. How often do you view the SIT as a group able to develop task appropriate performance strategies for the goals and objectives of the school?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

45. How often do you view the SIT as a motivationally charged group?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

46. How often do you view the SIT as a group that represents all stakeholders in the school?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

47. How often do you view the SIT as a group that values every member's contribution and one where all members have equal influence?

O always
O often
O don't know
O seldom
O never

(Please continue to the final page)

48. How often do you view the SIT as a group that is rewarded for the accomplishments of the group vs. the accomplishments of individuals?

- O always
- O often
- O don't know
- O seldom
- O never

49. How often do you view the SIT as a group that is provided with training, time and information to help facilitate the accomplishment of its tasks?

- O always
- O often
- O don't know
- O seldom
- O never

50. How often do you view the SIT as a group that receives assistance coordinating school improvement requirements with the day to day operation of the school?

- O always
- O often
- O don't know
- O seldom
- O never

51. How often do you view the SIT as a group that receives assistance in learning how to work as a group?

- O always
- O often
- O don't know
- O seldom
- O never

SECTION VI.

Please circle the appropriate response regarding the person completing this survey. (One response per item)

A. Male   Female

B. Parent   Student
    Teacher   Administrator
    Staff   Comm. Member
    Other _____

C. Number of years on the SIT
    0-1   1-2   2-3   3-4
    4-5   5-6   6-7   7+

D. How recruited
    Volunteered   Assigned

Please add additional comments here. Add additional sheets if you wish.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH QUESTIONS INVESTIGATION MATRIX

Table D.1: Research questions investigation matrix.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT DATA QUANTIFICATION	SCHOOL TEAM SURVEY/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	LITERATURE REVIEW	SCHOOL DOCUMENT REVIEW
RQ#1 What are school improvement teams called upon to do?	Does not apply	• To what extent is the team's task clear? • To what extent do you know the purpose of the team? • How meaningful is your work? • To what extent does the team share responsibilities? • How is the team held accountable for its performance? • What opportunities are there for you to learn? • What opportunities are there for the team to learn?	• What does Michigan require of school improvement teams? • What are they to accomplish? • How are they measured? • What does school reform literature say?	• Actual statements for goals, activities, timelines, individuals responsible, evaluation procedures, cost analysis and priority rankings • Descriptions of the activities and timelines for developing the components of the plan • A mission statement that includes all students, equity/quality, staff ownership/responsibility and commitment to teaching and learning for all • Cognitive, affective and school climate goals • Specific measurable learning objectives • Profile completed

Table D.1: Continued

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT DATA QUANTIFICATION	SCHOOL TEAM SURVEY/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	LITERATURE REVIEW	SCHOOL DOCUMENT REVIEW
RQ#2 How do the literature and current thinking concerning team effectiveness apply to school improvement teams?	• Does not apply	• Does not apply	• How do OB and OD explain team/team effectiveness? • To what extent do HR decisions impact team effectiveness? Are their patterns present from these theories and the school reform literature?	• Does not apply
RQ#3 Why do school improvement teams that appear to be configured similarly vary in their effectiveness?	• What similar relationships do all 6-8 middle schools in Michigan have? • How many schools follow the NCA school improvement planning process and how many follow the State recommended plan?	• Is the team well staffed? • To what extent is the size commensurate with the task(s) that need to be completed? • To what extent do team members have the expertise required to perform their tasks?	• What does school reform literature say? • To what extent o the main bodies of research implicate leaders in team effectiveness?	• Member list • Meeting agendas, minutes and correspondence • Training verification, on-site visits, schedules, individual documentation for all stakeholders • Observable/measurable student outcomes

Table D.1: Continued

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT DATA QUANTIFICATION	SCHOOL TEAM SURVEY/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	LITERATURE REVIEW	SCHOOL DOCUMENT REVIEW
RQ#3 Continued Why do school improvement teams that appear to be configured similarly vary in their effectiveness?	• Do a significant number of schools share the same demographics but vary in school achievement criteria? • To what extent do schools with the same demographics, same revenue and same resources vary in effectiveness?	• To what extent do team members have sufficient interpersonal skills to function as a team? • To what extent does the team membership represent all stakeholders? • To what extent do the team's members always agree? • To what extent do the team's members always disagree? • To what extent are meetings generally formalized?	• What does current thinking in OD, OB and HR say regarding organizational structure and context as it relates to individuals in teams?	• Documented data • The degree to which staff behavior and the organization has changed • The degree to which student outcomes have been reached • Percentage of parent participation in conferences • Gender inequities recognized and plans in place to rectify
RQ#4 To what extent do school improvement team members pay attention to criteria for effective team functioning?	• Does not apply	• To what extent are you recognized and reinforced contingent on the team's performance?	• To what extent does current thinking in OD and OB apply to processes within school improvement teams?	• Goals and activities of the SIP

Table D.1: Continued

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT DATA QUANTIFICATION	SCHOOL TEAM SURVEY/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	LITERATURE REVIEW	SCHOOL DOCUMENT REVIEW
Q#4 Continued To what extent do school improvement team members pay attention to effective team functioning?	Does not apply	• To what extent are rewards administered to individuals versus the team? • To what extent do rewards provide incentives for team collaboration and do the rewards encourage individuals to differentiate themselves from the team? • To what extent is training or technical assistance available to the team and are training and assistance provided primarily at the team's initiative? • To what extent are training and assistance determined by administrators and do you have access to data and forecasts to determine appropriate tasks and strategies?	• Is there evidence to suggest that teams must attend to creating conditions for effectiveness? • To what extent does the type of work the team has to accomplish affect its performance? • Is there more to determining team effectiveness then just measuring outputs and what would these measures be?	• Job-related indicators/ standards for staff • Follow-up, support, practice and coaching • Participation of staff in developing SIP and staff acceptance of its validity • Staff consensus on priorities to be addressed • Staff acceptance of responsibility for implementing the plan and a formal method of communicating progress on activities • All involved are formally in accord with the decision to implement the SIP • Are future challenges recognized?

206

Table D.1: Continued

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	MICHIGAN SCHOOL REPORT DATA QUANTIFICATION	SCHOOL TEAM SURVEY/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	LITERATURE REVIEW	SCHOOL DOCUMENT REVIEW
RQ#5 To what extent are leaders of school improvement teams interested in managing the team's actions, as opposed to creating conditions that support team effectiveness?	Does not apply	• To what extent does the team leader assist the team to work interdependently and coordinate deadlines and decrees? • To what extent does the leader spend time building commitment within the team? • To what extent does the team receive assistance in avoiding giving inappropriate weight to select individuals? • To what extent does the team receive assistance sharing expertise within the team membership? • To what extent does the team receive assistance avoiding flawed implementation strategies and developing new ways of proceeding with work?	• How integral is management of the team to team effectiveness? • What can leaders do to help teams be more productive? • Are there identifiable conditions that enhance team effectiveness?	• Goals 2000 and State Board mandates • Core curriculum for all students • Articulation across all grade levels • Articulation between core curriculum outcomes, instruction and assessment • Administrative proof of money, time and other resources dedicated to implementation of the SIP • Building-level management support of the SIP demonstrated through scheduling, time, space allotment, staff development and communications • Identified community resources used

207

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE
ON RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

January 25, 2001

TO: Stephen KAAGAN
       430 Erickson

RE: **IRB# 01-002** CATEGORY: EXPEDITED 2-F

       APPROVAL DATE: January 25, 2001

TITLE: THE DYNAMICS OF TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AS IT RELATES TO
       ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR IN
       HIGH AND LOW ACHIEVING SCHOOLS: A SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION
       AND DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this
project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human
subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are
appropriate. Therefore, the **UCRIHS approved this project.**

RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval
date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green
renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to
continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for a complete review.
REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior
to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal
form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written
request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB#
and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments,
consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.
PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work,
notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving
human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating
greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and
approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email:
UCRIHS@msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web:
http://www.msu.edu/user/ucrihs

Sincerely,

Ashir Kumar, MD
Interim Chair, UCRIHS

AK: rj
cc: Dean Pratt
    9175 Apple Orchard
    Fenton, MI 48430

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