

# CDRC

**Empowering Parents and Building Communities:  
The Role of School-based Councils  
in Educational Governance and Accountability  
(First Draft)**

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**Community Development Research Center**

New School University

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## Introduction

In recent years, policy-makers and educators have increasingly recognized that parents can play an important role in school governance. This recognition has coincided with a global trend towards decentralization of the education sector and reforms for greater decision-making autonomy at the school level, reforms that have usually been premised on the need for improved school performance and accountability. Most commonly termed school-based management, or SBM, such reforms have been adopted by school systems as diverse as those in Victoria, Australia; Memphis, Tennessee; Chicago, Illinois; Nicaragua; and Minas Geras, Brazil. These reform efforts have institutionalized the participation of parents, community-members, teachers, students, and other role groups through school-site councils (SSCs) while holding principals responsible for academic performance. The formation of SSCs is premised on the theory that providing a voice for various stakeholders in schools will lead to better decision-making and a greater commitment from all groups to improved educational outcomes (Odden et al 1997; Gershberg 1999b).

These reforms have implications for community development that have largely been disregarded in both the education and community development literatures (Stone et al 1999). Particularly in low-income communities, schools influence the socioeconomic and cultural fortunes of communities both because they are often one of the few viable institutions that remain when neighborhoods experience decline, and because upwardly mobile families often cite the decline of schools as a reason for leaving a neighborhood. If the proponents of SBM are correct in their assessment of the benefits of such reforms, parent participation has the potential to create a virtuous circle of school improvement and community development in several ways:

- Parent participation may lead to new initiatives in schools that provide needed services to community residents such as health care, counseling, literacy assistance, or English as a second language;
- Participation may provide parents with opportunities to develop leadership skills, thereby acting as an impetus for leadership development in communities;
- Collaborative decision-making may strengthen ties between schools and communities, leading to a greater commitment of resources to schools by local businesses and individuals;
- SBM may lead to curriculum and instruction that is better suited to community strengths and capabilities, thereby leading to improved educational achievement and reducing or reversing the flight of middle-class families.

We know little, however, about when parent participation is successful, and the circumstances under which the outcomes listed above may occur. Reform models vary significantly in the composition of SSCs and the extent of decentralization. Some councils have a majority of parents while others are led by school staff with some parental and community representation. Some have advisory or even perfunctory powers while others can hire and dismiss the principal and set important school policies. Several questions remain: What circumstances and reform models lead to effective parent participation? Does such participation have the desired impact on educational performance? And, finally, does participation lead to the outcomes for community development listed above?

This paper argues that SBM reforms can, under certain circumstances, result in effective parent participation and that when it does, community development benefits can be realized. It does so through an examination of SBM in four jurisdictions—Kentucky, Hawaii, Chicago, and the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Texas—that have undertaken particularly ambitious experiments with SBM. Data for the paper are derived from secondary sources and interviews with key actors in school reform in each of the four places including public officials, representatives of non-profit organizations, academics, as well as parents, principals, and teachers who have participated in SSCs. Interviews were conducted during visits to the four places between April of 2000 and March of 2001.

In the first section of the paper, we review the literature on SBM and develop a framework for analyzing the relationship between SBM, the role of parents on SSCs, and community development outcomes. We then discuss the extent of parental participation in schools in the two states and two cities and the impact of these reforms on school decision-making and educational outcomes. In the final section, we discuss the relationship between SBM and community development.

### **Parent Participation in School-Based Management: A Review of the Literature**

The emergence of school site councils represents a fundamental departure from conventional relations between parents and school professionals. As such the literature on the subject is in a formative stage,

primarily consisting of case studies of a handful of well-publicized examples of SBM, most notably Chicago and Kentucky (Hess ed. 1992; Pankratz and Petrosko 2000). Few have attempted to synthesize lessons and develop a generalizable framework with which to assess experiences with SBM (Summers and Johnson 1996; Wohlstetter et al 1995). Fewer still have focused on the implications of such reforms for disadvantaged communities. This section will develop a comparative framework for analyzing the role of parent participation in school governance and the implications of such participation for school improvement and school-community relations.

The earliest experiments with SBM were initiated in the late 1980s, and were a response to the perceived failures of school systems. Popular perceptions viewed a lack of accountability in schools as contributing to a waste of funds, inappropriate and outdated curriculum and instructional practices, and a lack of responsiveness of schools to parents and children (Hess and Easton 1992; Pankratz 2000). SBM has frequently been implemented alongside measures to use standardized testing to determine school funding and teacher assignments—the rationale is to provide schools with the flexibility to be innovative, while holding them accountable for the results (Pankratz 2000). By the mid-1990s statewide mandates for SBM had been instituted in Kentucky, Hawaii, Texas, Colorado, and North Carolina. City or countywide mandates were in place in Chicago, Miami, Memphis, Los Angeles, San Diego, Rochester, and Cincinnati, among others.

Models of SBM vary widely. In some cases, SSCs are empowered to make binding decisions and establish policy regarding personnel, budget, curriculum, and extra-curricular activities (Table 1). Chicago's SSCs have perhaps the widest range of powers, including the authority to hire and dismiss principals, develop and implement school improvement plans, and set the school budget (Bryk et al 1997). In other cases, council powers are merely advisory, and the scope of their authority is more limited. Councils also differ in the groups they represent, which may include principals, teachers, parents, community residents, students, and school staff. In most cases, teachers and the principal form the majority; Chicago is the only large school system in which parents and community representatives are mandated by law to have

majority membership on councils. The proportion of representatives from each group on councils has obvious implications for their relative influence; weak representation of parents is often a significant obstacle to their effective participation.

**Table 1: Types of Decisions that may be Decentralized to School-Site Councils**

Organization of Instruction	Set instruction time. Choose textbooks Define curriculum content Determine teaching methods
Personnel Management	Hire and fire school principal Recruit and hire teachers Set or augment teacher pay scale Assign teaching responsibilities Determine provision of in-service training
Planning and Structures	Create or close a school Select programs offered in school Define course content Set examinations to monitor school performance
Resources	Develop school improvement plan Allocate personnel budget Allocate non-personnel budget Allocate resources for in-service teacher training

The main rationale for the adoption of SBM is that it will lead to improved student academic performance. A growing qualitative and quantitative research literature has emerged on the characteristics of high-performing or effective schools (Mohrman and Wohlstetter 1994; Creemers 1994; Darling-Hammond 1997) that mirrors the much larger literature on successful organizations (Barzelay 1992; Lawler 1992). This literature concludes that strong leadership, highly qualified and committed staff, a focus on learning, and responsibility for results characterize high-performing schools. Another set of literature reviews the evidence on the process by which schools improve, and yields conclusions that are consistent with the effective schools research. For example, in an evaluation of school improvement on three continents, Dalin et al (1994) concludes that essential ingredients in successful reforms are a sustained commitment to quality improvement, local empowerment to adapt programs to local conditions, strong emphasis on school and classroom practice, and strong support linkages between education authorities and the school "via information, assistance, pressure and rewards."

Advocates for SBM and SSCs argue that these reforms contribute to these outcomes in several ways. First, SBM may stimulate leadership development among principals by enabling them to effectively develop and communicate a school-wide and community-wide commitment to a common mission and vision for the school, which can be managed by the implementation of the school improvement plan. Second, SBM and school site councils can contribute to excellent teaching in a variety of ways. When decisions on significant pedagogic matters are transferred to schools, teachers are empowered and motivated to work collectively to improve services delivered to students. When school principals are given the authority to carry out meaningful evaluations of teaching staff, teachers can focus their training on what they need to improve. When resources for training and training decisions are given to the school, teachers and principals can be demand-driven in purchasing the training they need, rather than being supply-driven in accessing training provided by centralized bureaucracies. Third, SBM can facilitate and reinforce a focus on student learning by providing the information required to assess learning problems, devolving appropriate pedagogic decision-making to the school, and allocating additional resources to schools with special needs. The visible product of this process is a solid school improvement plan, constructed with the active participation of teachers and the community, and with real possibilities of being implemented.

Finally, when implemented along with measures to assert standards for educational achievement, SBM can also enhance accountability in two ways. First, it provides a mechanism for 'accountability from below' from parents, community representatives and students to complement the 'accountability from above' from the Board of Education and other school bureaucracies. Providing all stakeholders with a voice in school decisions also makes politically sensitive measures to increase accountability more palatable. For example, the decentralization reform in Chicago replaced tenure for school principals with four-year contracts and required each principal to sign an annual performance contract with the system specifying measurable goals for the year. Schools that consistently fail to meet goals may see their principal dismissed and teaching staff reassigned (Hess and Easton 1992; Bryk et al. 1997). In Kentucky,

a school's level of funding may rise or fall based on its ability to meet biennial improvement goals on statewide standardized tests (Foster 2000).

While the focus of past analyses has been on these educational outcomes, SBM has implications for school-community relations that are less frequently discussed. Students in low-income communities face obstacles to academic achievement beyond deficiencies in curriculum and instruction caused by inadequate funding, high staff turnover and inefficiency. Research has persistently shown that, in poor communities, the prevalence of single-parent households, the lack of formal education among parents, the stresses of poverty, crowded and inadequate housing, and other factors conspire to create a home and community situation that inhibits academic achievement (Wilson 1996; Kaufman 1994). These conditions are exacerbated by the sense of alienation that many parents feel towards schools due either to linguistic obstacles (in the case of some immigrant families) or a general perception that school employees do not represent the interests of the community. As Stone et al (1999) state:

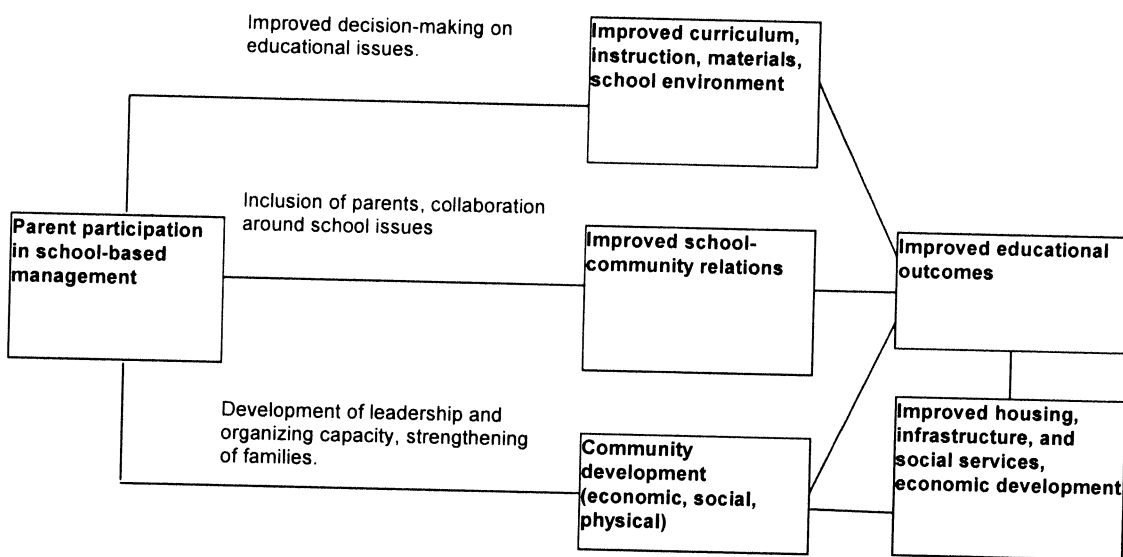
Particularly in low-income communities, teachers voice concerns that parents fail to help educators do their jobs. For their part, many parents and community members experience the school as an alienating institution.... Enlisting schools in community development means first reversing the dissociation between schools and poor neighborhoods.... These initiatives call for engaging parents in the life of the school, sometimes in school governance itself.

Recognizing the implications of the community context in which schools are embedded allows us to identify a number of ways in which educational performance can be improved, and to understand the implications of school improvement for community development. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation describing three impacts of parent participation on educational outcomes, school-community relations, and community development. The first reflects the arguments discussed above—parental influence may lead to curriculum and instruction that better meets the needs and capacities of communities. Second, collaborative decision-making between parents and community members on the one hand, and principals, teachers, and school staff on the other, may enhance school community relations. This may lead to improved educational performance both because parents may become more aware of their role in their children's education and educated about the influence of the home



environment on student achievement, and because parents and community members may commit increasing time and financial resources to schools. In addition, parent participation may have a direct influence on the physical, social and economic development of communities in three ways. First, participation in schools may lead parents to develop skills that may enable them to take on leadership roles elsewhere in their communities. Second, perceptions of improvements in schools, as well as the sense of investment in the process that comes with participation, may help to slow or reverse the flight of families out of low-income neighborhoods. Third, participation in school improvement may act to facilitate community involvement around other issues, be they physical redevelopment, the lack of social services, or others.

Such outcomes are not a foregone conclusion—they are dependent on parents being able to participate effectively and assert meaningful influence on decision-making. Shaeffer (1994: 16) highlights the useful distinction between parent participation, which implies a relatively strong and active role on the part of parents and other stakeholders, and parent involvement, which connotes “passive collaboration.” For this study, participation by a stakeholder group means that the group gains some power that its members consider important, and can make decisions autonomously. Yet parents face a number of obstacles to participation, including resistance from teachers and principals, and the lack of access to relevant information, that may thwart their influence and render their experience demoralizing rather than empowering. Thus an understanding of when and why parents are able to participate is essential to an analysis of the impact of SBM on school-community relations.



**Figure 1:**  
**The Impact of Parent Participation in School Based Management on Educational Outcomes**

Research points to a number of factors at the school level that affect parent participation. Perhaps the most important factor is principal leadership—principals who are effective leaders and employ a collaborative model of decision making may successfully engage parent participation even where SBM has not been implemented. Second, parents are likely to exercise much more influence where they are organized and assert a common agenda, and particularly where they have technical and political support from independent non-profit organizations that work on issues of school governance. Finally, the relative representation of parents on SSCs and the degree of authority of SSCs have important implications for parent influence for obvious reasons.

Table 2 describes four organizational models of SBM that can be observed in practice that have quite different implications for parent participation. Three parameters define the degree of parent influence in each model. The first is the degree of authority decentralized to the school level, including the degree of autonomy in allocating the school budget, the extent to which important decisions can be made at the school level, and the degree to which schools are restricted by Board of Education regulations, or collective bargaining agreements regarding wages, personnel decisions, or uses of school buildings. The

second is the degree of authority of SSCs relative to principals—whether they are empowered to set policy, and the extent of their mandate. The third is the representation of parents on SSCs relative to other groups. Where parents are a majority or plurality they are likely to exercise greater influence, and are also likely to be empowered by the recognition of their preeminent role to play a more active part in leading and making decisions.

**Table 2. Four Models of Parent Participation on School-Site Councils**

Model of SBM	Degree of authority at school level	Degree of authority of councils	Parent representation in decision-making
Parent participation	High	High	High
School accountability	High	High	Low
Principal-centered	High	Low	Low
Bureaucratic oversight	Low	Low	Low

The four models defined by the table are abstractions—no actual experience with SBM corresponds perfectly with any one of them. Nonetheless, they are useful for analyzing the models implemented in practice. Under the parent participation model of SBM, councils have a broad mandate to institute and implement changes in many aspects of school management. Parents have a majority on councils, and are elected by parents or community residents. Such an arrangement creates the potential for participatory democracy within schools, although this outcome is dependent on a high degree of parent commitment and organization. Due to political resistance from principals and teachers, and skepticism regarding parent participation among lawmakers, this model is relatively rare, with Chicago being the sole example in a major school system. The school accountability model tends to coincide with measures for increased accountability, such as high-stakes testing. It is premised on the need to give various school-level stakeholders a voice in order to gain their acceptance of politically sensitive attempts to hold them accountable—Kentucky’s experience corresponds most closely with this model (Pankratz and Petrosko 2000). Under the principal-centered model, power is decentralized but school councils are merely advisory, leaving other stakeholders with little formal authority over principals. This model corresponds most closely to El Paso, where SSCs have no power to implement school policy. In the final, district

centered model, reforms bring little change as the educational bureaucracy gives up little budgetary discretion or decision-making power, limiting the authority of both principals and SSCs.

The implications of these various models for school-community relations and community development are apparent. Where councils have little authority and school autonomy is limited, there is little potential for collaborative decision-making. Where parents have limited influence, they are unlikely to gain leadership skills or to feel empowered by their experience on councils. However, even where the parent participation model prevails, the implications for community development are dependent on the success of SBM—where the model leads to conflict or has a negative or neutral impact on school performance, it is unlikely to lead to positive outcomes for communities.

### **The Origins of School-Based Management in Chicago, Kentucky, Hawaii, and El Paso**

The following discussion will provide an historical overview of reforms for SBM in each case study jurisdiction, as a prelude to the analysis of the role of parent participation in each. The purpose is to understand the ways that locality-specific contexts shape the model of SBM that is adopted. While SBM is usually seen as a means to improve educational performance, the models adopted reflect different judgments as to the causes of school failure, and differences in the political clout of parents, teachers, principals, and other groups. Thus, for example, the reforms in Chicago were implemented with the explicit objective of addressing the frustration and alienation of low-income communities towards the school system—a motivation that was largely absent in the other three cases. Variations in the motives behind the reforms had profound implications in each case for the model of SBM adopted, and by extension for school-community relations. Table 1 describes the characteristics of SBM in each case.

**Table 1. Summary of Characteristics of SBM in Chicago, Kentucky, Hawaii and Ysleta**

	Composition of council	school-site	Method of selecting parent members	Extent of school-site council authority
<b>Chicago</b>	6 parents, 2 community residents, 2 teachers, the principal, one student (in high school).		Elected by community residents.	Sets policy regarding curriculum and instruction and extra-curricular activities. Responsible for hiring and dismissal of principals, establishing school improvement plan, and allocating budget.
<b>Kentucky</b>	Principal or head teacher, three teachers, two parents.		Selected by largest parent organization in school.	Sets policy regarding curriculum and instruction and extra-curricular activities, although they must work within curriculum guidelines established by standardized tests. Responsible for budget allocation and establishment of school improvement plan.
<b>Hawaii</b>	To be determined by at school level. Must include principal, and representatives of teachers, parents, community members, school staff and students.		To be determined at school level.	Responsible for all aspects of school decision-making, although the precise responsibilities and power of SSCs is determined at the school level. SSCs must apply for waivers and exceptions where decisions contravene Department of Education regulations.
<b>El Paso</b>	Half school professionals, half parents and community representatives. Actual size and composition to be determined at the school level.		Selected by principal with advisory assistance of school council.	SSC's role is purely advisory, and covers curriculum and instruction, personnel decisions, establishment of school improvement plans, and extra-curricular activities.

## Chicago

Chicago is by far the most frequently cited case study in SBM, and its reforms are the most far-reaching. It is the only large city or state in which legislation mandates that parents must represent a majority of members of councils, which are referred to in Chicago as Local School Councils (LSCs).<sup>1</sup> These councils are responsible for hiring or dismissing principals, and developing school improvement plans that establish school policies regarding curriculum and instruction, use of the school building, and extra-curricular activities (Bryk et al 1997). They also have considerable flexibility in managing the school budget. Despite recent efforts to curb SSC powers, Chicago's experience continues to be the most radical experiment with SBM yet undertaken. The following account describes the distinct set of factors—an acute educational crisis, socioeconomic and demographic change, the emergence of black political power, and an active set of non-profit and community-based organizations working on educational issues—that brought the reforms into being.

Chicago's school system is predominantly minority (53 percent of students are African-American and 34 percent are Latino) with **X percent** of children eligible for free lunch. Like many urban school systems in 'rust belt' cities, the Chicago school system experienced a crisis in the 1970s and 80s brought on by increasing poverty, the flight of middle-class families to the suburbs, and a declining tax base. The result was persistent budget shortfalls and an increasingly impoverished student population. Between 1978 and 1984, the dropout rate stood at about 43 percent, reaching two-thirds in some low-income neighborhoods, and half of graduates were reading below the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level (Bryk et al 1997). Two events in 1987 acted to galvanize support for educational reform. The first was the death of Mayor Harold Washington, who had been elected three years earlier as the city's first African-American mayor on a platform of neighborhood development. Educational issues had become associated with Washington's legacy following a series of educational summits that he convened in the mid-1980s. The second event was a 19-day teachers strike that shut down the schools. Pervasive distrust in low-income communities of city government and school professionals, and concern for the poor performance of

students, created a groundswell of support for greater community control of schools. An effective grassroots campaign championed by a coalition of non-profit organizations, academics, and business leaders led to the passage of the Chicago School Reform Act (CSRA) of 1988.

The hallmarks of the CSRA were its mandate of a high degree of parent and community participation, measures for teacher and principal accountability, and increased resources for schools (Hess 1992). Principals were to be hired under four-year performance contracts. Greater budgetary discretion at the school level was combined with a requirement that schools undertake more intensive planning efforts, specifically to develop three-year improvement plans to be updated yearly. Funding was to be directly allocated to schools based on a formula accounting for the number of disadvantaged students in a district, resulting in a significant budget increase for schools with large numbers of low-income students. The reforms also changed the school board membership from a system of 11 school board members nominated by the mayor, to a 15-member board with representatives nominated by a School Board Nominating Commission that was dominated by parent and community representatives from LSCs. Most significantly, however, was the creation of the SSCs, which left significant power at the school level in the hands of parents and community residents. The reforms met with considerable enthusiasm in communities—in the first elections for SSC representatives in October of 1989, 313,000 people turned out to vote for 17,000 candidates for 5,420 LSC members in 542 Chicago schools.

Implementation of SBM in Chicago has continued to engender controversy, and in recent years Mayor Richard Daley and the successive superintendents have attempted to reduce the influence of parents. These efforts are premised on the assessment that SBM has not led to improvements in academic performance, although advocates contend that they have (Designs for Change 2001). In 1995 and 1996 a series of reforms were initiated. The school board was pared to five members to be selected by the mayor. The authority of LSC was also reduced, and the board was given expanded authority to take over failing schools and reassign principals and teachers. Responsibility for the training of SSC parent

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<sup>1</sup> While councils go by different names in the four case study school systems, the term school-site council will be used throughout

members was placed in the hands of the Board of Education—prior to these changes training had largely been conducted by independent non-profit organizations, many of which had been formed by advocates who had been involved in the school reform movement. Soon after the reform, the Board of Education placed 109 schools under probation. Since that time the Board and nonprofit education advocacy groups have engaged in a continuous debate about the outcomes of this experiment with Board intervention for school performance (Designs for Change 2001).

### Kentucky

While Chicago's school reform is notable for its focus on school-community relations, Kentucky's is notable for its focus on improved educational performance as measured by standardized tests. The reforms were initiated in response to a ruling of the state supreme court that found the state's educational financing system unconstitutional. The state had long had one of the most ineffective educational systems in the country. In the 1980s, Kentucky ranked 50<sup>th</sup> among states in adult literacy and adults with a high school diploma, 49<sup>th</sup> in the percent of people who went on to college, and 48<sup>th</sup> in per pupil educational expenditure (Hunter 1999). The system was also marked by disparity in access to educational resources, with the highest spending districts spending two and a half times more per pupil than the lowest spending districts. The state supreme court finding created a political movement for reform that differed from the one in Chicago in that it was largely elite-based. The most prominent advocacy organization in the school reform movement was the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, formed by attorney Edward Prichard and consisting of a group of government-appointed members of a citizen's committee on educational reform (Sexton 2000). Although the group attempted to stimulate greater public involvement in the issue through televised public meetings on the school system and other means, it depended largely on support from prominent politicians and newspaper editorials in its lobbying effort.

The Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA), which was passed in 1990, led to extensive changes in school financing and governance. Funding for schools increased dramatically, and the state's rank in

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this paper for purposes of clarity.



funding per pupil rose to 21<sup>st</sup> in the country by the mid-1990s (Hunter 1999). KERA also created Family Resource Centers to provide a variety of social services to families. Finally, it institutionalized SBM and SSCs, although their authority is more limited than in Chicago. Schools have the authority to shape curriculum and instruction and set the hours of instruction, but must achieve certain goals in standardized testing or face restructuring by the state. The mandate for parent participation under KERA is much more modest than in Chicago. They are a minority and, where no strong independent parent organization exists, principals often exercise considerable influence in the choosing of parent representatives.

The Kentucky model of SBM reflects the focus of the reforms on educational achievement, as well as the influence of teachers' and principals' organizations on the legislation. There was a conscious effort in the drafting of KERA to use SBM to overcome political obstacles to increasing the accountability of educators and school administrations. This motive was accepted both by policy-makers and non-profit advocacy groups. As one activist who was involved in the lobbying effort stated:

The parents were involved for the standard reason that parents are involved, that they should have a voice. But essentially there was a political bargain—teachers will accept responsibility, and accept accountability, in return for some control over the local decisions. I think Chicago started out with a different set of purposes, to return the schools to the community and deal with political frustration on the part of parents. We had that, but at the state level you are not going to come up with the same rationale you come up with in a city. We might have had community and parental frustration with the schools, but there was never an argument that called for the creation of mini school boards elected from the community.

The limited mandate for parent participation in KERA also reflects skepticism about community control that partially reflects popular stereotypes of rural communities in Kentucky, and particularly the Appalachian communities in the eastern part of the state. Scholars who follow the reform movement highlight the fact that, while KERA sought to establish some balance of power between parents, teachers, and principals at the school level, there was broad acceptance among advocates and policy-makers that principals should remain the dominant power, and that the state should remain the final arbiter of change.

There's an element of paternalism in the reform. Everyone has the image of Eastern Kentucky as a bunch of hillbillies sitting around drinking moonshine. These are distasteful stereotypes, but people locally know about them. People felt that school achievement in certain areas, especially Eastern Kentucky, was so abysmal, that there was such an ingrained sense of good old boyism, that we had to break through all this. Even at an unconscious level, the mindset was that we've got to drag those people, kicking and screaming, into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. And the only way we can get their attention is to say "you've got to improve your school achievement or we will take over your school and send somebody over there to tell you what to do." So it was an attempt to try to pull achievement up, push it pull it, cajole it, threaten, do something to pull us out of this lethargic situation.

Hence schools have significant responsibility for setting curriculum and instruction, yet have to follow strict guidelines set by the state. They can set the number of hours of instruction, but must retain enough instructional time to cover the considerable amount of material covered by the standardized tests. In practice, the outcome is that schools are increasing the number of instructional hours, and in some cases cutting time devoted to music and physical education classes, to ensure that students are prepared for exams. While these changes have raised some concern, Kentucky's success in raising scores on standardized tests have muted any criticism of the reform.

#### Hawaii

Hawaii's school system is marked by considerable ethnic diversity—(demographics on student body?). Those claiming native Hawaiian ancestry are disproportionately low-income, and are concentrated in rural communities such as the Waianae district on the island of Oahu. As in Chicago, the reforms for SBM were implemented in the context of considerable tension between communities and the state, and for some activists educational issues are inextricably linked with the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty. This link is explicitly manifest in the emergence of Hawaiian language charter schools—this phenomenon will be discussed in the next section.

The Hawaiian experience with SBM is distinct in a number of ways. Unlike the other case studies, it was instituted from within the Hawaii Department of Education without significant outside pressure following a visit to observe SBM in Miami-Dade County by then Superintendent Charles Taguchi in 1988. SBM was instituted statewide in 1989, and although it has never been mandatory, about 86 percent of schools

have implemented it since. The legislation also leaves considerable room for flexibility in the type of SBM model schools choose, stating simply that schools should have a process that incorporates input from six stakeholder groups—principals, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and other community members. The most common arrangement adopted has been the formation of a school site council with a single representative of each group. However, some schools have chosen different mixes of representatives, and a few have adopted other decision-making frameworks, such as open meetings, that do not involve the formation of councils (Pacific Educational Research Laboratory 1992). The reforms are also distinct in that they have not accompanied other dramatic changes, such as substantial increases in educational funding or the institution of high-stakes testing. They are a modest, stand-alone effort to bring new actors into school governance.

Schools have been given considerable authority under SBM legislation in areas such as curriculum and instruction, school hours, extra-curricular activities, and others. Changes that contravene Board of Education regulations must go through a waivers and exceptions process. Although this process has been the source of some frustration, some schools have been able to make significant changes, including major changes in curriculum and instruction, changes in the school calendar (such as adopting a calendar year school schedule), and hiring for new instructional programs.

#### Ysleta School District (YISD), El Paso

The Ysleta School District is one of nine school districts in El Paso County. The prevalence of Mexican immigrants in the district creates a unique set of issues—of the district's almost 50,000 students, 86 percent are Latino, 27 percent have limited English proficiency, and 33 percent are low-income (citation?). Thus students face unique issues with language and acculturation. The district also has an unusually large population of migrant workers whose children may change schools several times a year. Despite these issues, in 1998 Ysleta was the first urban district to be declared a Recognized District by the state for its improvements on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test.

Texas mandated SBM at the state level in 1995. As with Kentucky, Texas' model of SBM is largely focused on improving educational achievement and implementing standards-based reform. The Texas Educational Code establishes the use of monetary rewards and sanctions for schools based on performance. The Code also establishes minimum requirements for SBM, and makes SSCs responsible for establishing and reviewing campus educational plans, performance objectives, and classroom instructional programs. However, districts establish specific guidelines for the structure of councils and the extent of their authority.

In the YISD, the mandate for SBM is generally weaker than in the other three cases. Most importantly, the SSC's advisory role means that principals are the final authority in most decisions. SSCs, referred to as Campus Educational Improvement Committees (CEICs) in El Paso, are comprised of 50 percent professional staff, and 50 percent parents, community members and business representatives. Of the professional members, two-thirds must be teachers, with the remaining one-third composed of other campus or district level staff. The parent and community members are selected by principles with the advisory assistance of the SSC. The actual size of the SSC is established by the SSC itself. In practice, SSCs have had a limited impact on school policy in most cases due to their marginal role and lack of formal power.

### **Comparison of site-based management models**

A number of insights emerge from the previous discussion. First, it is notable that movements for parent participation based in civil society was instrumental in ensuring the relatively high degree of decentralization and parent representation in Chicago, and to a lesser degree in Kentucky. Organizations of civil society played a role not only in shaping the legislation, but also in galvanizing public interest in reform, and in bringing various actors at the school level to the table and ensuring that their voice was represented. Second, the profiles of each case indicate that a cookie-cutter approach to school reform is inappropriate—in each case SBM models were designed to address distinctive local educational issues and political obstacles.

In each of the above cases, the primary rationale for SBM was the need to improve educational performance. In fact, such improvement has been recorded, particularly in Kentucky and Ysleta. In YISD, the district went from having only one of its 49 schools rated 'recognized' or 'exemplary' (the two highest ratings accorded by the Texas Department of Education) in 1994, to 44 of 50 in 1998. Kentucky was one of only three of 38 states to show statistically significant improvement on the NAEP tests between 1993 and 1998. In Chicago, the results have been more mixed—a study by Bryk et al (1997) found that, while math scores have trended up at the elementary school level since reform, reading scores have trended up only in the earlier grades, while trending down afterwards. Furthermore it is impossible to determine to what degree these changes are attributable to SBM as opposed to other reforms, such as high-stakes testing and school choice, that have been implemented during the same period. In fact a statistical analysis in Kentucky found no relationship between the implementation of SBM and test scores (Petrosko and Lindle 2000).

### **Parent Participation and Decision-Making: Outcomes for School Improvement**

While this paper has argued that successful collaboration around school improvement may influence community development, such success is not a foregone conclusion. SBM is premised on the assumption that parent participation will enhance mutual understanding between various role groups and lead to a freer flow of ideas, yet an alternative hypothesis is that the opposite will occur. Parents may have perspectives on curriculum and instruction, school hours and other issues that conflict with those of principals and teachers, and may even contravene collective bargaining agreements. Obstacles to effective communication based on linguistic and cultural barriers, and different communication styles, may cause misunderstanding and exacerbate parents' sense of alienation. The result may be inactive or conflict-ridden SSCs, and a deterioration of school performance. This section will discuss experiences with parent participation in Chicago, Kentucky, Hawaii and El Paso. It will argue that, while the relative authority of SSCs and the representation of parents on SSCs are the most important factors affecting successful parent participation, two other factors also play a key role—the leadership style of principals,

and the existence of civic capacity in the community at large. It will then discuss the impact of parent participation on school improvement, and on school-community relations.

Previous studies have identified a number of issues that emerge in parent participation. Principals and teachers often initially resist parent participation out of concern that parents may make ill-informed or capricious decisions (Wohlstetter et al 1995). They may also feel that their job security is threatened if parents are given authority over personnel decisions. There was some teacher and principal resistance to parent representation on SSCs in all of the case study cities and states. However, research indicates that SBM and parent participation are usually accepted once implemented. In Chicago, for example, surveys indicated that 75.6 percent of teachers on councils expressed positive feelings about councils (Ryan et al 1997). In Kentucky, a 1999 survey found that 82 percent of principals, 76 percent of teachers, and 85 percent of parents said that SBM was functioning well (Kentucky Institute for Educational Research 1999). Thus while conflict between parents and other SSC representatives are an issue, it tends to be the exception and decreases over time.

An additional concern regarding SBM is that parents may not have the time or capacity to participate effectively. Survey research tends to dispel this concern as well. In Chicago, a survey of parent LSC members found that 83 percent of parent representatives spent 5 hours or more per month, and one-third spent 10 hours or more per month on SSC related duties (Ryan et al 1997). In addition, about 48 percent of these same parents reported spending 10 or more hours per month in school outside of their LSC duties. Thus many parents are willing and able to commit a significant amount of time to school-related responsibilities. Survey research in Chicago and Kentucky also indicates that parent members of councils are uniformly more educated than the population at large, and are much more likely to be professionals (Ryan et al 1997).

The actual effectiveness of councils, and the ability of parents to influence decisions, are much harder to assess. In a 1997 study, Bryk et al found significant variations in SSCs' performance following Chicago's

dramatic reforms. They describe three categories of schools. The first are those that have focused on specific issues, such as safety and security, school uniforms, peripheral educational changes, or 'Christmas tree' programs that are not conceptualized within a broader educational philosophy. The second consists of SSCs that are largely nonfunctional, meaning that they frequently do not meet quorum, meet for less than an hour, experience significant conflicts between role groups, and spend most of the time during meetings discussing procedural issues. The final set of SSCs, which the authors represent as an ideal, are those that systematically plan for a coherent agenda of school reform based on a well-defined educational philosophy. They term these 'emergent restructuring' schools, and find that they represent about one-third of all schools. Interviewees in Kentucky, El Paso, and Hawaii discussed similar categorizations, although the issues and approaches differed. The following are some of the more notable changes to school policy and practices that have been put into place by SSCs:

- In Hawaii, a number of schools have extended the school year to a calendar year, and have made other innovative changes in scheduling;
- In Chicago, SSCs have substantially increased the number of African-American principals (numbers?);
- In all cases, SSCs have led to schools adopting national models of school improvement, such as...

In addition to changes in curriculum and instruction, some schools have initiated programs to involve parents directly in the classroom. A notable example is the efforts of Community Organizing for Family Issues (COFI), a consulting group that works with community-based organizations in Chicago to train parents to be more involved in their communities. COFI has organized parents in several schools to implement the Parent-Teacher Mentoring program, which places parents in the classroom as assistants to teachers. The objective of the program is both to assist teachers who are often burdened with large class sizes, and to empower parents to become more involved in their children's education. While parents initially struggled in many schools to find enough teachers who would volunteer to mentor a parent, the program has gradually gained acceptance, and in some instances teachers have requested that SSCs make the program mandatory. The program has resulted in significant improvements in students' achievement on standardized reading tests. About 14 schools are in various phases of implementing the program. This model also has implications for school-community relations, as will be discussed later in this paper.

While the above changes have most certainly been shaped to some degree by parent participation, it is difficult to determine precisely how much influence parents have on councils. Determining conclusively the extent of parent influence would involve a content analysis of a sample of minutes from SSC meetings, and an analysis of the decisions that resulted from these meetings—a task that is beyond the scope of this study. However, research does provide some evidence regarding parent influence, and how parents and other role groups perceive their influence. An evaluation of the YISD's model of SBM, for example, concluded that a significant proportion of schools have become 'democratic dictatorships' in which SSCs coexist with the reality of principal dominance of decision-making (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts 1998). In Hawaii 42 percent of parents, as compared to 75 percent of teachers, rate their influence on curriculum decisions as a five or six on a scale of six (Izu et al 1996). In Chicago, in contrast, parents are more confident of their role in decision-making. A study conducted in 1997 found that 91 percent of SSC members agree with the statement that the principal asks the SSC for its input, and 80 percent agree that the SSC is highly or moderately involved in the budget process (Ryan et al 1997). This almost certainly reflects the greater representation of parents on SSCs in Chicago.

What, however, explains the differences in levels of parent input between schools within the same district, city or state? Research points to two factors. First, Bryk et al (1997) argue that the presence of a principal who is a good leader and successfully engages in a collaborative leadership style is the single most important school-level factor that enhances parent participation. As supervisors in the school setting, principals enjoy a particularly powerful position relative to other SSC members. The dominance of principals is even apparent in some Chicago schools, despite the fact that the principal is hired by SSCs on which parents are a majority. Even where principals and teachers have good intentions towards parent participation, their professional position, familiarity with school issues and frequent interaction may bias decision-making. A Kentucky principal expressed this concern:

Parents aren't on the premises, so even the most scrupulous educator who would never claim to have made a decision before the (SSC) met, nonetheless has more insider knowledge than the parents do. As a result, parents feel left out or misdirected or uninformed when it comes time to talk about particular issues. Even if they are



consciously not doing it the fact is that proximity gives them more information, more data on which to base their analysis of the problem than what parents have.... There are a ton of intangible things that happen during the day that educators don't think of. So it's the insiders versus the outsiders, and the outsiders are outnumbered.

Overcoming this dynamic requires a principal who finds ways to systematically incorporate input from parents (for example by organizing community meetings), and can act as an advocate for parents and a mediator between parents and other members of SSCs. Thus a principal who can establish a vision and process for school change is essential to effective parent participation on SSCs.

A second important factor in the effectiveness of councils is the presence of civic capacity in the community at large (Stone et al 1999). Where recognized community organizations are present, they can help parent members of councils to develop a unified agenda, and train them to understand educational and budget issues and articulate their positions. In Chicago, parent mobilization around school reform led to the formation of a number of organizations that have since focused on organizing and training parents and advocating for a strong parent role on SSCs. Their role has been controversial. Since the mid-1990s, organizations such as Parents United for a Responsible Education (PURE), and the Chicago Association of Local School Councils, have lost the right to train parent SSC members, most likely due to their vocal opposition to many school board policies. Other organizations, most notably Designs for Change, have played a critical role in research and advocacy for a continued strong role for parents.

Where at least one of these two conditions exist, substantial parent participation is possible even where SBM legislation does not focus on the role of parents. An example is the Waialae Elementary School in Honolulu, Hawaii. Located in an upper-middle class neighborhood of predominantly single-family homes, Waialae was the first school in Hawaii to submit a letter of intent to implement SBM (Izu et al 1996; Pacific Region Educational Laboratory 1992). It has since initiated a number of changes, including experimenting with portfolio-based assessment, replacing report cards with parent-teacher conferences, and significant changes in curriculum. Waialae's early adoption of SBM was initiated through collaboration between a community-based organization called Friends of Waialae School (FWS) and a

principal who was unusually facilitative in her leadership style. Through the efforts of FWS and the principal, all major changes were discussed at length in open forum meetings to which all community residents were invited. The level of mobilization in the community was such that, in 1995, 90 percent of parents were aware of SBM, and more than half had been to an SBM open forum meeting (Izu et al 1996). In sum, the changes that were made reflected the convergence of a number of fortuitous events and an exceptional level of commitment from both parents and educators. Particularly in Hawaii, where evaluations of SBM record high levels of frustration with the difficulty of attaining the necessary waivers and exceptions from Board of Education regulations, few schools have undertaken such significant efforts at reform.

Where neither of these conditions exist, parent input is generally limited. In Kentucky, Hawaii, and Ysleta, even where parents are confident and articulate, their role is primarily one of gadfly and watchdog, ensuring that funds are used responsibly, school professionals remain accountable, and that a parent perspective is represented. These roles are important, but do not represent a potential for dramatic improvement in school-community relations.

In school systems where SBM has not created opportunity for significant parent voice in school policy, alternative models of school governance have sometimes emerged. Two such models are the charter school movement in Hawaii and the Alliance School movement in El Paso. The charter school movement in Hawaii is in many ways a direct outcome of disenchantment over the model of SBM implemented by the Department of Education. Many principals, teachers and parents in Hawaii have expressed frustration with the waivers and exceptions process, and some have accused the Department of Education of using its resources to try to continue to direct school-level policy (Auditor, State of Hawaii 1998). In addition, the lack of state guidelines for SSCs has resulted in limited parent participation in most schools. Since the legislation mandating charter schools was passed, many communities have seized upon the rather vague guidelines to develop highly inventive new models of school management and curriculum. Of the 24 new schools created about half have Hawaiian language and cultural programs. This represents a sentiment

that the existing school system has not adequately served the native Hawaiian community, and the belief that education must have a strong base in local culture if it is to have an empowering affect on native Hawaiian communities. Most notably, a number of Hawaiian language immersion schools have been formed in which instruction is entirely in the Hawaiian language. These schools represent in part an effort to revive the Hawaiian language, and have required the translation of a large amount of instructional material.

The Alliance School initiative was organized by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), and is currently being implemented in approximately 100 schools in Texas (Shirley 1997). In El Paso, the El Paso Interreligious Service Organization (EPISO), a community organizing entity that is affiliated with the IAF, has been the main actor. Like IAF organizations elsewhere in Texas, EPISO has been active in a number of community development and infrastructure delivery issues in the local colonias, low-income areas on the fringe of the city that are populated primarily by first and second-generation Mexican immigrants. The IAF employs a model of organizing based on the principals Saul Alinsky, the famed Chicago organizer. The Alinsky method is premised on the need to develop the political consciousness of communities so that they will eventually undertake radical political activism of their own accord.

Organizing around school improvement was a natural outgrowth of EPISOs community development activities, as educational achievement was perceived among many low-income Mexican immigrants as critical to the economic success of the community. The Alliance school model involves much more intensive parental involvement than conventional SBM models. Community organizers first identify potential leaders among parents, and encourage them to organize 'house meetings' of 10 to 15 people to discuss issues of concern to them. These meetings are meant to broaden the dialogue regarding school policies, and increase awareness of educational issues. Frequent public meetings are held to discuss issues and provide parents with an opportunity to raise concerns. 'Parent academies' are held with prominent speakers on educational, social, economic and political issues in an effort to enhance understanding of how these issues might inform decisions in local schools. 'Accountability sessions' are

also held with local political leaders and representatives of the school district so that parents have an opportunity to articulate their concerns in a forum explicitly designed to their advantage. Parent leaders also become active in the lobbying efforts of the Alliance School Initiative. The model puts parents at the forefront of policy-making at the school level, and in political lobbying efforts at the district and state levels.

The initiative has resulted in several major educational innovations. Among them is the NetSchools Constellation program, a remarkable initiative that was initiated by the SSC at Ysleta Elementary School. By a unanimous vote at an open meeting attended by approximately 500 parents, teachers, students and community activists, the school decided to provide all students between the third and sixth grade with a personal laptop computer. The initiative came about when parents identified the lack of computers in the predominantly low-income households in the neighborhood as a major obstacle to academic achievement. The NetSchools initiative is now being implemented throughout the YISD. Ysleta Elementary has also constructed a new school building with significant design input from parents. Parents in several middle schools have also successfully requested an increase in the number of advanced placement (AP) courses in order that students be eligible for college. Evaluations have shown that Alliance Schools have experienced above average improvement on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test.

The implementation of the Alliance Schools project requires both strong leadership from the principal, and the presence of strong community organizations, in this case one with a faith-based component. As stated by an EPISO organizer:

The reason there is a relationship with a community-based organization, like EPISO or Austin Interfaith or another group, is that principals are constantly being told to control their parents. And there has got to be an independent base of power that can hold the school district accountable and allow talented principals to take some risks in organizing their parents. The congregation base in EPISO provides that independent political base.

In sum, building stronger schools and stronger communities cannot be viewed separately—they are part of an iterative process. Strong SSCs require a certain extent of awareness and mobilization within the

broader community, and can be further strengthened where the mobilization of parents meets with a cooperative and facilitative attitude from a progressive principal.

### **SBM and Community Development**

The final section of this paper will assess the direct impact of SBM on community development. We have already listed a number of ways in which such an impact may occur: by enhancing leadership skills among parents; by raising awareness of issues in the socioeconomic and physical environment of the community that discourage educational achievement; by opening up schools for a number of functions that may benefit communities, including the delivery of public health and social services, literacy assistance and English as a second language programs, after-school programs, and others; and by improving school-community relations, thereby helping communities to retain population. We will address each of these issues in turn.

There is little doubt that leadership development is a beneficial externality of SBM. In the four case study areas, at any given time 5400 parents and community residents in Chicago, 2500 in Kentucky, and hundreds more in Hawaii and El Paso are playing leadership roles in school governance. For many of these people this is a first experience in a leadership role. Whether the SSC experience leads to a true sense of empowerment, however, rests on the question of how much influence parents can realistically exercise, and how much support they receive in their efforts from other council members, other parents, and the broader community. In all four case study areas, interviewees related anecdotes about parents who had gone on from SSCs to play leadership roles at the community, and sometimes at the city level. These include cases of parent SSC members who ran for local school board or other elective posts; who found employment in community development organizations or social service agencies; who became teachers or other school professionals; or who simply played a much greater role in their community through informal organizing, attendance at community meetings, and other activities.

Once again, Chicago provides the paradigmatic example. The strong parent role in school governance creates an incentive for parents to participate, and the city's dense infrastructure of community and civic organizations has capitalized on the reforms as a potent issue around which to organize parents for involvement in schools and other community issues. The Community Leadership and Family Issues (COFI) group, discussed earlier, has explicitly attempted to capitalize on the synergy between neighborhood organizing and SBM. Likewise, PURE and other non-profit organizations have recruited staff from among SBM members to engage in lobbying efforts.

Based as it is upon an Alinsky model of organizing, the Alliance School Initiative in Texas makes leadership development an explicit goal. It deliberately places parents in roles that require them to exhibit leadership (such as in house meetings) and confront people in leadership positions (such as in accountability sessions). Many parents who have been associated with Alliance Schools attribute a personal transformation to the experience, and take pleasure in recounting their conversion from passive parent to active advocate for their children. One parent recounted her role in EPISO's efforts to lobby for expanded funding for arts programs:

Before the Alliance School initiative came along, I was the one who would just park in front to drop off my kids, and pick them up when it was time to go home. Now I am running down the hallway with a senator telling him how important this money is for this for the school, I am fighting for my kids. They are getting ready to vote on this bill, and we are pulling them off the senate floor.

Particularly in predominantly Latino immigrant communities, where linguistic and cultural issues can present obstacles to civic participation, such experiences can play a critical role in building the foundation for broader civic and political participation.

With regards to the role of parent participation in schools as a means to raise awareness about other community issues, the Alliance School model again provides an intriguing case. The Alinsky model of organizing is premised on the belief that once people are organized to solve an issue in their community, they will inevitably come to recognize the interconnectedness of this issue with other problems they face. The task of the organizer is therefore to identify those issues that are most likely to stimulate interest

with the intent of using that issue as a catalyst for community activism (Alinsky 19??). This approach has experienced considerable success in El Paso. In Ysleta Elementary School, for example, parents lobbied successfully to change traffic patterns and increase the number of stoplights in their neighborhood after a girl was struck and killed by a truck on her way home from school. A number of Alliance Schools have developed other initiatives, including adult education, health screenings for community residents, and a pre-kindergarten programs, after parents identified the importance of the health and well-being of the family in childrens' education. Parents from Alliance Schools in the colonias of Socorro, one of the poorest parts of El Paso, were instrumental in having the local streets paved and widened. They raised the issue of school busses' inability to navigate local streets in their lobbying effort. More generally, the Alliance school initiative has allowed EPISO to gain greater recognition both in communities and citywide, and it has been able to capitalize on this to advance its community development agenda.

Concerning the hypothesis that SBM leads to schools being used for functions that benefit communities, this has taken place to some degree in all four of the case studies. In Hawaii and Kentucky, separate initiatives have been established to provide social and health services through schools. Under KERA, schools with at least 20 percent of children eligible for free lunch can apply to receive grants from the state for Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSCs). The services that are to be delivered by these Centers are determined at the school level, and can include reading programs to prepare young children for school, services to connect children to eye care or health care, after school care, education for new or expectant parents, drug and alcohol counseling, job training and placement, or others. By 1999, 702 schools—93 percent of those eligible—had established such centers (Kentucky General Assembly 2000). The most common services provided were health services and referrals, and counseling for family crisis and mental health. In Hawaii, Parent-Community Networking Centers have been established to organize volunteers at the community level to provide tutoring and other services (Ing 1999).

The COFI project in Chicago has also led to the development of new functions in schools. In addition to the parent-teacher mentoring program mentioned earlier, parents trained under the program have initiated community centers in schools which are centers for ESL and GED classes and other educational programs for parents, recreational activities for children, and a number of social service programs. SSCs have played a critical role in this initiative both because many parents associated with COFI are SSC members, and because parent representatives on SSCs provide a source of support for such initiatives. In El Paso, SSCs have initiated classes in ESL and preparation for citizenship, among others.

Finally, it is impossible to determine from existing evidence what impact SBM has had on the stability of communities. As SBM has coincided in most cases with a broader movement for educational reform, as well as major political and social change, it is not possible to determine whether parent participation is responsible for enhancing community stability to any significant degree. It seems reasonable to speculate, however, that the combination of improved academic achievement and increased opportunities to interact with school professionals have influenced such relations. In our discussions with parent representatives on SSCs, most expressed satisfaction, and in some case surprise, at the level of professionalism of teachers and principals. An EPISO organizer recounted the interaction between parents and teachers at a house meeting at Ysleta Middle School:

We had about 200 parents and teachers sitting around talking about what their experience in education had been and why they wanted their students to go to college. And the parents were so shocked to learn that most of the teachers were the first in their family to go to college, and that they had struggled to do it. And you just saw the ice breaking in the way people began interacting with each other. Because they had assumed that the teachers had been born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and that wasn't the case. And that allowed them to see each other as human beings.

Countless less dramatic revelations have occurred in SSC meetings, and through the day-to-day interactions of parents, teachers, principals, community representatives, and students.



## **Conclusion**

The preceding analysis has highlighted a number of potential impacts of parent participation on SBM on community development. Some caution is required in drawing conclusions from the evidence presented. SBM alone is not sufficient to bring about significant change—certain facilitating conditions must be present. Most notably, parent participation is unlikely to be successful in the absence of a strong civil society or an activist principal. It is also notable that schools that succeed under SBM reforms tend to have collaborative decision-making processes in place already. In Hawaii, for example, an evaluation of SBM found that the first 9 schools that implemented SBM were already moving towards participatory decision-making models prior to the reform (Izu et al 1996). Nevertheless, SBM can play an important role in realizing the potential of schools as critical institution in reversing decline in low-income communities.

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