

Posting 1

Do schools have the responsibility for providing opportunities for individuals who work there to search for their white stone? How would it happen for students? Teachers? Parents?

My first reaction in reading this article was if these reforms are as great as they appear, how is it that they are not rampant in the education system. The next question was how does this relate to site based management. Site based management as I have come to understand is the shift to empower schools and to go away from the traditional bureaucratic model of schools. As Fullbright (1988, p5) maintains “second order type of changes such as site based management gives more to an open, participatory system and is worthy of a tool to increase student achievement.” However, learning and achieving, which are paramount in the accountability of teachers, outweigh if individuals can find their white stone.

Schools are not set up to give students the opportunity to find their niche in life. Funding and classroom arrangements do not fit well in this holistic way of looking at educating an individual. As a wise person once said, ‘The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.’ Life is like an old boy's network. Is there a reason why doctors need to work 30 hours straight? No. These old school ways have permeated through time and have remained because it has always been that way. The education system is another one of those old boy's network. The school system requires certain standards be met in order for students to graduate. There are lots of standards that are slanted towards one type of person. Universities are another one of those old boy's network. Universities use standards as a method of accepting or not accepting a student. Universities do not care about if an individual's emotional skill is great. They care about an individual's facility with words and numbers, things that can be measure objectively. Society is another one of those old boy's network. Society measures the success of a person by their credentials (Handy, 1997, p226). They are not in the business of nurturing. We are in a give society and not a give and take society. As such, one of the most important assets in an individual is their ability to be flexible in any given situation.

The sad truth with this is that if one child goes on to find their white stone, it will undoubtedly brings great joy to all of us as teachers. However, educators are not set up to provide opportunities for each and every individual. The depth of understanding that is required from students does not allow for development in other areas, which are more enjoyable. In Singapore, they believe learning to do a few problems well and really understanding why they got the answers is much more important than doing a lot of problems without that understanding. The North American education system has not come to this realization. When this does happens, it will allow teachers to focus more on an individual's facility with emotion, which makes for a more rounded person. In order to give parents an opportunity to see that their child reaches their potential, they must be given more choice on how their child is educated. Schools must also be more vigilant in

creating dialogue with parents in order to shift the responsibility back to the parents in the education of their children. Schools can no longer be the place where all learning occurs. Learning should be seen as an enjoyable life time commitment that has no end. It is only when we all cherish this notion will children see school not as an enemy, but as a partner in the search of their white stone.

Handy, C. (1997). *A Proper Education*. London: Random House.

SEDL. (1991). *Site Based Decision Making: Its Potential for Enhancing Learner Outcomes*. Retrieved June 30, 2003 from <http://www.sedl.org/change/issues14.html>

Posting 2

Education products are different from business products (i.e. humans), so why is there such an emphasis on comparing education to business?

Accountability and efficiency are two things that education has tried to imitate from the area of business. From parents and stakeholders wanting more of a voice, teachers are experiencing more pressure from their scrutiny. Individuals (customers / parents) have different perceptions of what is satisfactory service. However, a customer is a customer and we need to respect their wishes. Where do teachers draw the line if we are to remain a professional body? Our credibility is at issue. Taxpayers also want to know where their money is being used. As a result, school boards are streamlining how things are done. However, teachers are a valued part of education and are often overlooked in policy change.

Tom Peter, the revered 80's guru in business motivation lectures, talks about the four things that make companies successful. The first is customers. In education, our students are the customers. Our teaching is the commodity. If our teaching lacks inspiration and fails to meet the student's needs, do they have recourse? Probably not, but did the teacher or the system fail him. In business, there is strict accountability. If a sale fails to go through, you will be sure that some heads would roll. No questions asked and this is accepted as a norm. In teaching, there are too many mitigating factors that might explain why a student failed. As a result, there is no real accountability. Peters also mentions innovation. We have to keep with the times. Policy change takes too long to happen because of the different levels of involvement (school board, union, parents, teachers, and community). After all, it is public money. Angus (1993) states, "reforms are not directed at changing the system so much as tightening up the system" (Angus, 1993). The most important aspect of any organization is the people. Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart, led by example, model what he said, and took care of his staff. "If you have pride in your organization, you can get your staff to do anything" (Paterno, n.d.). Some of his floor staff became instant millionaires when they sold out on their stock options. When organizations take care of the people who work for them usually good things happen. This happened with Scandanivian Airlines, which was popular in the 80's because of their approach, being 1% better at 1000 things. The final thing is leadership. The highest form of courtesy a leader can offer is to listen. Master leaders who inspire are good

communicators and listeners. They try to listen to their customers naively without offering expert advice as most professionals want to do immediately. A master leader is one that can frame his roles within the context they lead. When this happens, it perpetuates 'effortless action'. "When a stream come to some stones in its path, it doesn't struggle to remove them, or fight against them, or think about them. It just goes around them. And as it does, it sings. Water responds to What's There with effortless action" (Hoff, 1993, p157). Enthusiasm and pride cannot be measured quantitatively, but are the building block to a successful organization. Without it, we have status quo.

Peters reiterates what works for business should work for education. I believe the small stuff works.

Hoff, B. (1993). *The Te of Piglet*. New York: Peguin Books.

Posting 3

What is the current relationship between parents and teachers at your school and what do you feel needs to be accomplished to reach a truly collaborative relationship?

West Vancouver School District is a small district that has three high schools and twelve elementary schools. It is a high performing school district with many students opting to go to university. Many of the parents in the district are also professionals who are supportive of their children's academic endeavours. In fact, the average West Vancouver male earns \$100,063 two and a half times the average of a British Columbian (\$38,809). What does this say? The female in the family has a great deal of time. To illustrate, you will get phone calls from parents if and when their progress of their child is in jeopardy. Parents will fight you tooth and nail to have their student's letter grade raise a percentage point to get an 'A'. This is the reason why teachers are proactive in their approach. Midterm reports given. A notification is sent home if a child has a drop of one letter grade and 'Incomplete' reports are also sent home when progress needs revaluation. This vigilance means fewer headaches for the teachers and administration. The triplicate in paperwork is essential to 'cover one's butt'. We have had parents in the past suing teachers for not covering things stated on the original outline. As a result, teachers are more careful with the wording and have added a small print to their outlines.

For me, I invite parents to be partners in their child's education. Although parents may be a 'pain in the butt' sometimes, the greatest courtesy we can give is to listen. In fact, master teachers do not rush to offer expert advice. They listen with empathy and usually the problems can be sorted out easy. As Bullough, 1987 in Sparkes et al, 1993 mentions, "teacher isolation has high utility value for teachers since it is linked to autonomy in their minds and this has high cultural value." When we sit the safety of our cocoon too long, we begin to feel secure in how we do things. This is not how an organization should work. As long as teachers "stayed within certain implicit boundaries of curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation (Dale, 1979, in Sparkes et al, 1993), I argue teachers have the right to be questioned. However, when communication is opened up and is nurtured, parents have a tendency to be on your side when and if their child does not measure up.

Posting 4

At a SBDM school meeting, a colleague asks why your school continues to employ a computer teacher. Shouldn't every teacher be a computer teacher? How would you respond?

As a teacher whose core teaching is in Information Technology, I have lots to lose if this position was to be eliminated. However, as Beare & Slaughter suggests (1994), the world is not a static place so why should education be? If Information Technology were a subject that could be immersed as part of the overall curriculum, I would be a supporter.

Mackenzie (2001) points out, "In many schools, the failure to fund and design robust professional development leads to "the screensavers' disease" — the educational equivalent of an accountant's red ink — as hundreds of computers sit idly glowing throughout the day and the district's investment proves a huge waste of funds."

As I see it now, teachers do not have the capability of covering the curriculum and at the same time use ICT (Information Communication Technology) effectively. The curriculum itself needs revision to cover fewer problems and to explore them with more depth to promote critical thinking and the analytical process of learning. This would leave more time to use ICT to enhance learning to meet curriculum standards. Moreover, it would allow teachers who are ICT challenged to have more time to experiment and hone their professional skills. Teachers are often rushed to cover a curriculum that is far too broad to be explored in a year. Similarly, students are being forced fed a curriculum that has little relevance to them except in provincial examinations. ICT is a worthy goal. The Conference Board of Canada (2000) has many ICT employability skills set. An example, "locate, gather and organize information using appropriate technology and information systems", is one skill that the real world looks for.

We, as teaching professionals, have a duty to act on this if we feel ICT is an important goal. Discontinuing the service of a computer teacher will create a "new program that is not compatible with the paradigm about the world" (Beare & Slaughter, 1994). Our current paradigm about the world is focused on accountability, eliminating the computer teacher position will not help in this reform.

Beare, H. & Slaughter, R. (1994). *Education for the twenty-first Century*. New York: Routledge.

Conference Board of Canada. (2000). *Employability Skills 2000*. Retrieved July 10, 2003 from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/employability-skills.htm>

Mackenzie, J. (2001). *How Teachers Learn Technology Best*. Retrieved July 10, 2003 from <http://fno.org/mar01/howlearn.html>

Posting 5Reactions to Pleasantville Community School SBDM Model

As a person looking in, it is remarkable how much can be accomplished in such a short time period. The process is even more remarkable as most of it was done online and using chat as one of the tools. I have found in the past, chatting with more than one person is at the best of times difficult. The PowerPoint presentation was nicely set up, the progression understandable, and the personalized reflection slides unique. Congratulations.

The Pleasantville Community School SBDM model has three distinctive goals. They are to improve student learning, develop inclusive learning, and foster learning through technology. As a school new to SBDM, your model, which includes a few goals, has a much better chance of being successful if there was a huge list of goals. In fact, our school planning council (SPC) had two goals that were submitted to the BC Ministry of Education. The goals including improving reading literacy across the curriculum and improving personal and social responsibility. Our SPC had only two months to get this information to all their stakeholders and to produce a document of intention. Because it was mandated by the government and was seen as hostile, I would debate that all the committee members had the same viewpoints or had good intentions. With Emery Dosdall being a consultant in the introduction of SBDM in BC, there are some who believe his approach will work. However, there are political overtones such as the inequality with the number of committee members from each faction that overrides its credibility. I can see through your recorder reports that many of you were committed to being a part of this continuous process. Even in your roles, you seemed to work things out collegially. With the time limitation and the online communication problems, your document is utmost professional.

Your model emphasizes a summer university course as mandatory preparation for administrators really delves into roles and responsibilities. Professional development is at the core of your model. This is critical in preparing for how leaders deal with SBDM. As you suggested, it is merely “window dressing if the principal has the final veto.” Caldwell (1997, p71) talks about this contention as part of the “reinvention of the professional development program with universities playing a key role.” Self-management needs the understanding of teachers and parents as well. Their voluntary participation in the preparation process might not be the best practice. It should be mandatory for all. It is only when members know where they stand does the SBDM process work. Their active participation in decision-making allows for greater ownership in the process. Even when their viewpoint might not always be what is decided, they have an understanding that it is all part of the process. This is similar to having trust in our legal system. Although at the best of times, the system might not produce the most popular decision, we all trust how the process works. My question is “Are there other recourse for committee members when their viewpoint is not the one decided?”

Caldwell, B.J. (1997). *The Impact of Self Management & Self Government on Professional Cultures of Teaching: A Strategic Analysis for the Twenty-First Century*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Posting 6

Reactions to Brainy Bunch SBDM Model

Once again I am very pleased with how your model turned out. The linking of the different slides makes it very interactive. Although I had to go back a few times due to “quick fingers”, the interactivity made for a pleasurable viewing. Your group used mostly V-Class and email to communicate. Reading your reports clearly showed collegiality amongst the group. It is only through such cooperation and support that you were able to create such a professional model for us to see.

Your group selected ‘Site Based Leadership’ (SBL) as a name for the process in your school and clarified it with a definition. Your model emphasized that the school is only one of the sites involved and that leadership is stressed over management. There are some slides that refer to SBDM instead of the given acronym SBL. You gave five visions that included engaging the learner, collaboration, ICT integration / leadership, equality, and social responsibility. Different actions were added to each of these visions. The visions and actions together were nicely conveyed. For a school starting out in SBL, the declaration of a multi-facet number of goals that although tied together in making a school a better place to be was too many in my opinion to be focusing on in its infancy. Perhaps, Brainy Bunch School which in a high socio-economic area and is a high achieving school already has many of these goals in place. Even with this, there is always room for improvement.

Your visual model outlines the roles and responsibilities of each faction. It is interesting to note that neither Brainy Bunch nor Pleasantville include the union as part of the decision making process. This is fine in my perspective because many times the bureaucratic wrangling that the unions invite into its collective bargaining is not pleasant. As well, unions advocate a “blameless culture” of sorts, as they often do not see things as black or white, but rather tend to make issues out of nothing. They often see issues as unjust and hamper the decision-making process. The interactive model makes it easy for each faction to understand how the process works. The SBL has team building as part of its mandate and advocates the underlying importance of promoting lifelong learning and keeping the issue of teaching and learning central to all our actions. They also advocate that all our stakeholders are represented in voice and in action. This is central to how the process of SBL works. It is not about ego or power, but about listening, problem solving, conflict resolution, team building, and trust building (O’Haire, 1997, p27). All these are at the core in the advancement of civilization.

O’Haire, N. (1997). *School-Based Decision-Making Resource Guide*. Edmonton: ATA.

Posting 7

District Site Based Decision Making Policy Reports

Group 1 and 2, thank you for sharing your policy reports with us. As an observer or perhaps a parent shareholder in SBDM. There are two differences that I noticed perusing through the district policy reports. The Happy Valley District #123456 is in a pdf format

whereas the Gopher Hill District is in html format. Although both are web based which would allow for easier access and feedback for those who are part of the SBDM process, the Happy Valley District contains far more examples of how this process would look like. In fact, the examples shown for collection of artifacts pertaining to current practices and desired practices are quite extensive. The ‘show and tell’ using portfolios is a useful method of measuring progress. The three questions that they wanted answered were: Where are we going? How will we get there? How will we know we’ve arrived? However, do we have to inundate the shareholder with step-by-step information or do we draw out a framework for them to fill in themselves?

In contrast, Gopher Hill District has in its web pages information that is easily laid out using links. Unlike the pdf version, which could use a table of content for easy reference, Gopher Hill District has individual links (headings), which the shareholder can go back and forth for easy reference. It offers a clean design having the content being the main focus. However, it offers less information than the previous district report, but does provide a framework that can be filled in. As both districts have in its goals continued professional development and guidance for SBDM, the shareholders hopefully do have enough knowledge to fill in the framework. As O’Haire (1997, p6 Chapter 9)) mentions the only decision not appropriate for staff to make is about personnel matters. However, the budget, which is at the core of how a school is run, was not mentioned in the Happy Valley District SBDM policy report. As it was a long document, I doubled checked using the find tool for the word ‘budget’ and the search came out negative. Policy should be written for budget, as it will be the major cause of dissention amongst the shareholders if it is not defined.

I found both policy reports understandable. Although the 15 pages were long, it offered valuable insight to how a SBDM should operate. The Gopher Hill web site was an appropriate way to deliver the policy. The PowerPoint presentations would have to be converted to a different format, which would allow for user compatibility. Thanks again for showing us, the outside observers, the art of compromise, collegiality, collaboration, cooperation, and communication. All of which goes towards the building of a successful school.

O’Haire, N. (1997). *School-Based Decision-Making Resource Guide*. Edmonton: ATA.

Posting 8
Change Agency

Site Based Management (SBM) requires new roles for administrators and teachers. Caldwell (1997) describes this “major change to teaching as a job.” He sees the education system “having a core of full time highly trained professional teachers on five year renewable contracts supported by a range of assistant teachers and part time teacher who also work in other fields” (Caldwell, 1997, p67). The concept of a teaching job will no longer be looked at the same way that we see it today. In fact, the organization as a whole will not be the same.

There will be a core of professionals, technical, and managerial staff. On another level will be external contractors who provide specialist support. The final will be contingent workers who are temporary filling the gaps where needed.

(Caldwell, 1997 p70)

Obviously, our current educational organization would not allow this. For one, the union would strongly oppose this as step back for all their current and past members who have fought hard and made sacrifices in order to have conditions that their members enjoy today. We have all seen this where when input is requested from the staff. More than often, the union steps in and advises its members to not participate in any process that may result in a colleague's job being cut or changed. Advocates of SBM would see this in an altogether different light. They see the central issues being in an increase student achievement (learning) and more efficient use of resource (teaching). In this flatter organizational structure, what we begin to see is a “smaller full time continuing” professional core who are paid at a higher salary given their increased level of responsibility” (Caldwell, 1997, p70). Moreover, fee for service would be implemented as a reward for the levels of increased professional competence. Caldwell describes this “gain sharing” which is different from the merit pay as a way to show appreciation for those who have made a contribution to the school's improvement. SBM means developing a school improvement plan that involves all shareholders thus giving ownership to all in making a school a success. In the gain sharing, the SBM team would benefit from their efforts.

This sudden cause for alarm is not the job loss or the inequalities that would arise in such a scheme, but our view of change. Society is seldom ready for change. We prefer how things just as they are and often are quite hostile to those who do things differently. If we looked into history, the organization and the operation of a school have not changed very much. However, in this new generation of accountability and customer satisfaction, having a decentralized power structure and rewarding knowledge and skill make sense.

Caldwell, B.J. (1997). *The Impact of Self Management & Self Government on Professional Cultures of Teaching: A Strategic Analysis for the Twenty-First Century*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Handy, C. (1997). *The Hungry Spirit*. London: Random House.