

MIAMI, FL : SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Dade County, Florida, the nation's fourth largest school district with 260 schools and 225,000 students, has not let its size stop it from implementing innovative school site management programs.

Miami's "School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making" program gives individual schools unprecedented autonomy over staffing, budgetary and instructional decisions through the consensus decisions of an individual school's teachers and administrators.

Miami's programs are particularly remarkable given the district's size and demographic base. Miami's large Cuban population, and continuous influx of immigrants creates a host of educational challenges.

The programs implemented at individual schools vary from peer evaluation plans for teachers to decreasing class size in foreign language classes to paying teachers extra money for developing school curriculum. The following are examples of the many of the changes that have occurred or are underway.

A Contract of Compromise

Both the Miami School Board and the United Teachers of Dade, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, agreed to modify former district policies and proposals to promote educational improvement. The Miami School Board and the union have agreed to lift requirements regulating class size, the length of the school day and class period and the distribution of class size. In addition, the union has redesigned the grievance procedure to allow incidents to be handled at the school site level.

How Does it Work: Inside the Schools

- ☐ In Miami: Instead of having principals evaluate teacher performance each year, as had been the norm, teachers at ten schools have been trained to evaluate their peers.
- ☐ Sunset High School: To help students cope with personal and academic problems and provide them with additional counseling, a team of teachers agreed to shorten class periods by 5 minutes to create an additional 35-minute "tutorial session."
- ☐ Nautilus Junior High School: An assistant principal was replaced by two teachers whose time is divided equally between teaching and providing disciplinary and counseling tasks. These teacher/principals are compensated with an additional \$1200 a year.

Contact: Pat Tornillo, President
Florida Education Association/United/AFT
2929 S.W. 3rd Avenue
Miami, FL 33129
(305) 854-0220

HAMMOND, IN: REDESIGNING SCHOOLS FROM THE BOTTOM UP

In Hammond, Indiana, a growing number of decisions are now in the hands of school-site committees composed of teachers, administrators, and community representatives. Through the School Improvement Process (SIP) negotiated between the Hammond Teachers Federation (HTF) and the Board of School Trustees, Hammond, an economically hard-hit steel town, whose 25 schools serve 13,000 students, makes decisions about the delivery of public education a little bit differently.

How Does it Work? -- SIP's Guiding Principles

Teams made up of teachers, administrators, parents and students serve on an individual school's design team. From this design team, a "core" team is developed, comprised of about ten to fifteen people, the majority of whom are teachers. There are no hard and fast operational rules, other than the design teams try to involve people on staff who are viewed as leaders in order to create a balanced core team. The design teams are open to anyone who is interested: likewise, any member of the staff can propose that a new design team be formed around any issues of concern.

This group undertakes an extensive training program in communications and group dynamics. Participants are taught to continually rethink their positions with a view toward consensus.

The core team spends a considerable amount of time developing a "vision of excellence" for their school: How can the school be run as best as possible, both in the long and the short run? All decisions are made by "team consensus," to ensure that no individual rights are abused.

The Process at Work: Inside the Schools

- ☐ Kenwood Elementary School: Rearranged the school day to ensure a ninety-minute uninterrupted block of time would be devoted to reading activities.
- ☐ Hammond High School: Established a mentor program through which two teachers are released half-time to work with colleagues who want to become more effective in the classroom. The math department is also looking at ways to reorganize time periods so that students and teachers are not always working within the confines of a fifty-minute structure.
- ☐ LaFayette Elementary School: Revamped its kindergarten program and established a junior/senior kindergarten and a transitional first grade, which incorporate a wide range of hands-on activities in order to better meet the needs of youngsters who are not developmentally ready for a traditional curriculum.

Contact: Patrick O'Rourke, President
Hammond Teachers Federation/HFT
5944-1/2 Hohman Street
Hammond, IN 46320
(219) 937-9554