

- **Incomplete or skewed information.** Some information was described as being incomplete or skewed to highlight only the favorable results. An example of this was student performance information. Some Board members expressed concerns that increases in standardized test scores failed to account for all factors that could have contributed to the improvement, such as low performing students moving out of the District.
- **Lack of confidence in decision-making process.** In some instances, Board members did not have confidence that the District applied the right process in recommending a decision, and accordingly made deeper inquiries. The decision to close schools last year was an example of this decision. Some Board members felt that the process relied too little on actual facilities capacity data and bended to community pressures. Other Board members expressed concerns that the community was not involved enough in the decision process from the beginning.

All of these factors have contributed to perceptions that the Board is micromanaging, or extending their realm of responsibility down to District operations – responsibilities normally assigned to the Superintendent or the management team. District management perceives a lack of trust by the Board; the Board is frustrated by being told they just do not understand. This “disconnect” between District management and the Board is adversely affecting the decision-making process at the Board level.

During this study, documents provided to the Board were analyzed. Questions were also asked of Board members regarding training, and training records of Board members were requested. Based on analyses of this information, several recommendations are being made to improve the quality of information provided to the Board and to improve Board member’s ability to understand it.

***Recommendation 2-1: Improve the format and content of information provided to the Board, starting with the budget.***

The most frequently stated concern by Board members concerning management information was the annual budget. Adopting the budget is one of the Board’s most important decisions it makes each year. The Board receives information and correspondence throughout the year relating to the budget, but the most important is the formal budget document. Pasadena USD’s 2006-07 Annual Budget is a one-inch thick document. The first four pages of the budget describe:

- Text summaries of the Unrestricted and Restricted General Fund budgets
- A listing of revenue assumptions, such as the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) percentage
- A listing of expenditure assumptions, such as the average percent compensation increase
- A list of outstanding items, such as a pending actuarial report for workers’ compensation.

The remainder of the budget provides very detailed schedules of historical expenditures and budget amounts for 2006-07, checklists for state compliance and certification, and detailed worksheets supporting budget assumptions and calculations.

The District’s annual budget provides an excellent example of too much data and not enough meaningful management information. Below is an assessment of the 2006-07 Annual Budget.

- The budget includes a three-year history of actual financial information, plus a projection of actual data for the current year. Including the 2006-07 budgeted amounts, the budget contains a five year trend for review. This is a best practice, as most school systems provide only a three-year trend.
- There are no graphical representations of revenue or expenditure trends, or of the distribution of revenues and expenditures by function, program or other attribute.
- There is no historical or budgeted information on staff counts at the departmental, school or District level.
- There are no per-student expenditure measures or trends, or any other measures that might demonstrate improved or deteriorating efficiency at the District, department or school level, such as utilities cost per square foot, ratios of students to school clerical staff by school, or percentage of total expenditures devoted to direct instruction. These measures can be analyzed over time for trends, and in some cases industry standards exist for comparison.
- There are no definitions of terms used in the budget document.
- There are no descriptions of major changes over prior year amounts, or descriptions of expenditures relating to District goals and priorities.

The annual budget must contain legally required documents and supporting schedules, but the District should not be limited to this format in providing the Board information it needs to render judgment on the adequacy of the budget. There are other documents and correspondence sent to the Board regarding the budget throughout the year, but no document was found that provided a comprehensive view of the budget that had the characteristics listed above.

For other major pieces of information provided to the Board, the Board and District management should agree in advance on the content and format of the information. Data should not be given to the Board without explanation of what it means, and summaries and graphs should be used whenever possible. In several instances, the District does a better job in getting information to the Board in a useful format.

### **Recommendations 2-2: Increase Board technical training.**

While there is considerable room for improvement in the provision of information to the Board, there is also a need for additional Board technical training. Currently, Board orientation is held for all Board candidates prior to elections. However, post-election training is not being held for all new Board members at Pasadena USD. *BB 9230* of the Pasadena Unified School District's *Bylaws of the Board* states that, "The Board and the Superintendent or designee shall help each new member-elect to understand District operations and the Board's functions, policies and procedures as soon after election as possible."

The District tracks participation in pre-election Board orientation, but there is no District tracking of Board participation in additional training for continuing education purposes.

Many states legally require a minimum number of hours of training for Board members, generally with higher requirements in the first year. California state law does not require

Board member training, but suggest that it be done and the funds be allocated to it. Several Pasadena USD Board members interviewed were disappointed with early training sessions and did not actively pursue additional training. More recently Board members have been more active in taking courses, but acknowledged that more is needed.

The California Association of School Boards provides a wide-range of training programs for Board members on all aspects of school system governance. The Board should establish its own annual requirements for new and experienced Board members. First year members should be required to take no less than 20 hours of training. After the first year, no less than 10 hours should be required. The Board should collectively develop a training plan so that not all Board members take the same courses. Certain core courses should be taken by each member; other courses should be distributed among the members, perhaps based on committee assignments or areas determined by the Board to be more complex.

### **Board Committees**

#### ***Recommendation 2-3: Reconstitute Board committees.***

Pasadena USD has three active Board committees for facilities and capital, budget and finance, and student safety and conduct. Each of these committees is a standing committee, meaning that it continues until terminated by the Board. In prior years the Board had a curriculum committee, but this was disbanded after all Board members expressed an interest in reviewing the curriculum. The Board committees include representatives from the Board and District staff, and invitations may be made to third parties to address the committee. Like Board meetings, agendas for the committee meetings are posted, minutes are maintained, and the public is invited to attend and make comments.

The effectiveness of Board committees has been limited for some of the same reasons discussed above relating to management information provided to the Board directly. Committees at times make recommendations to the Board; on other occasions a verbal or written report is made without a recommendation. Based on observations of Board meetings, many of the same issues discussed in the committee meeting are re-hashed in the Board meeting. For example, in one Board meeting last year, a recommendation by the Budget and Finance Committee was made to accept the 2005-06 unaudited financial report on the consent agenda of the regular Board meeting. The item was pulled from the consent agenda, and many of the same topics discussed in the committee meeting were repeated in the Board meeting. In another example, the Facilities Committee discussed but did not recommend action by the Board on a lease of facilities for a charter school. Much of the same discussion was repeated at the Board meeting during an information item, including the same public input. These examples convey some degree of duplication of effort during committee meetings and Board meetings.

There are also examples of committees getting information to the Board too late to support a Board decision. For example, the Memorandum of Understanding with the Pasadena Police Department was not obtained from the Student Safety and Conduct Committee until the day it needed to be approved by the Board.

On other occasions there was miscommunication as to what the Board committee was to provide to the Board. The Facilities and Capital Committee made a recommendation to the Board regarding the redesignation of developer fees to technology projects. At the Board meeting, the Board requested that this topic be presented as an information item. The Board decided that it wanted to discuss this issue as a group after the committee had invested time analyzing it.

External ad-hoc committees or task forces have been better used by the Board to support decision-making. For example, the City of Pasadena Charter Reform Task Force was formed eight years ago to evaluate school District governance. Last year the Management Audit Advisory Council, which included city representatives from Pasadena, Altadena and Sierra Madre, as well as Pasadena USD Board members, was formed to initiate and follow through on this management audit. The Board seems to be more comfortable in acting on recommendations from committees that are more independent of school District operations.

The Board should reconstitute its committees by establishing a clear charge for each, and a clear designation as a standing or ad-hoc committee. The Board should make it clear to each committee when it wants information versus a recommendation on a decision. Pasadena USD Board committees will not be effective, however, until the Board begins to more consistently accept the recommendation and work of the committees without re-working the issue. One of the objectives of Board committees, is to reduce the amount of Board meeting time spent on topics that can be better handled off-line.

### **Public Input**

#### **Recommendation 2-4: Adopt a Code of Conduct for school Board meetings.**

California state law requires school districts to allow public input to the Board decision-making process. This is common in all states, but California is unique in that it specifically allows for public input for each action item to be voted on by the Board.

Based on attendance at one Board meeting and review of other meeting videotapes, the public input at Pasadena USD is at times disruptive to the decision-making process. In most states, members of the community are offered one opportunity to address the Board for a limited period of time. In California, the same individual may address the Board multiple times throughout the Board meeting. Further, there were instances observed where community members made inappropriate verbal comments about specific individuals employed by the District. Many states allow school Boards to establish Codes of Conduct for public participation. However, in California, the courts have upheld twice that restricting criticism of District employees is a violation of First Amendment rights. Government Code 54957 specifically states that the Board may not prohibit criticism of District employees. However, it also states that whenever a member of the public initiates specific complaints or charges against an employee, the Board president shall inform the individual that such discussions are reserved for closed sessions to protect the rights of the employee.

It appears that the intent of California law was to ensure public access to decision-making. The law does that, and most individuals that come to the podium understand and respect this privilege.

The Board should develop a Code of Conduct for all participants in a Board meeting, including community members, staff and Board members themselves. This Code of Conduct should prohibit inappropriate conduct including the accusations against specific members of the Board or employees of the District. Comments made against any individual that the Board wishes to entertain should be treated in the same manner as a personnel matter in Executive Session.

By subjecting everyone to the same set of ground rules, Board meetings will be more constructive and efficient, and the decision-making process will work better. The Board should seek the advice of legal counsel before implementing this recommendation to ensure that it is not in violation of state or federal law.

## **Board Deliberations**

### **Recommendation 2-5: Conduct Superintendent/Board teambuilding sessions at least annually.**

Several of the Board members acknowledged that they do not work very well as a group. The dynamics of group decision-making are often more complicated than the decision itself. Effective Boards have to learn how to work together, and this can best be achieved by learning more about their colleagues.

The entire Board, including all Board members, should participate with the Superintendent in an annual team building session facilitated by a registered provider. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LCOE) and the CSBA hosts teambuilding workshops throughout the year. The purpose of the team building session would be to enhance the effectiveness of the Board-Superintendent team and to assess the continuing education needs of the Board-Superintendent team. The assessment of needs should be based on the framework for governance leadership and shall be used to plan continuing education activities for the governance leadership team for the upcoming year. The Board-Superintendent team should attend additional team building workshops when there is turnover of the Board or the Superintendent.

The State of Florida has one of the best Board certification programs in the country. In addition to individual Board member certification, the Florida School Boards Association has an optional designation called the Master Board Program. Through this program, Board members and the Superintendent are required to conduct 40 hours of teambuilding and training as a group within the first 12 to 18 months of application. The objectives of this structured program are:

- To focus on the school Board and the Superintendent as a collective unit and develop their ability to work effectively as a governance team.
- To learn and build skills for effective team functioning.
- To identify areas for leadership development through self-evaluation of the leadership team.

If one member of the Board or the Superintendent leaves, additional group teambuilding and training must be done to reinstate the designation as a Master Board. It is important to note that Board members in Florida are compensated at higher levels than most states, including California.

The School Board of Hillsborough County (in Tampa) is a Master Board, and the effects of this program are visible in its highly efficient and effective Board meetings. The Pasadena USD Board should consider the level of teambuilding that makes sense, and should draw on principles applied successfully in Florida.

### **Recommendation 2-6: The Pasadena USD Board should adopt the CSBA Professional Governance Standards for School Boards.**

The Pasadena USD Board does not have a formal standard of governance in order to provide consistent and equitable school Board management. The Professional Governance Standards, included as **Appendix B**, establish three components the California School Boards Association (CSBA) deems vital to effective school Board management.

- The attributes of an effective individual trustee
- The attributes of an effective governing Board
- The specific jobs the Board performs in its governance role

These standards were designed as a proactive way to engage school Board members and the public in discussions about the importance of school Board accountability. They are meant to enhance the public's understanding about "responsibilities of local Boards and to support Boards in their efforts to govern effectively" (*CSBA Professional Governance Standards*).

Approximately 39 percent of the 1,054 school districts in the state of California have adopted these standards.

## **DISTRICT DECISION-MAKING**

The previous section discussed decision-making at the Board level. In this section, the school district decision-making process is analyzed from several perspectives. These include policies and procedures that govern the decision-making process and the specific components of the decision-making process – from the collection and analysis of data to the implementation and monitoring of the decision. This section also presents employee perceptions of the District decision-making process at Pasadena USD.

While several findings and recommendations are made in this chapter regarding decision-making, it is important to note that Pasadena USD has made, and implemented, some good decisions. In other instances parts of the decision-making process broke down, but without adverse consequences. The purpose of this report is not to second guess decisions that have been made, but to provide suggestions to improve both process and policy so that decisions can follow a more consistent and defensible path in order to improve student achievement and management efficiency and effectiveness.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES GOVERNING DISTRICT DECISION-MAKING**

Pasadena USD Administration Board policy provides the Superintendent with broad authority to make District level decisions and influence the decision-making process throughout the school system. Board policy 2000 states that:

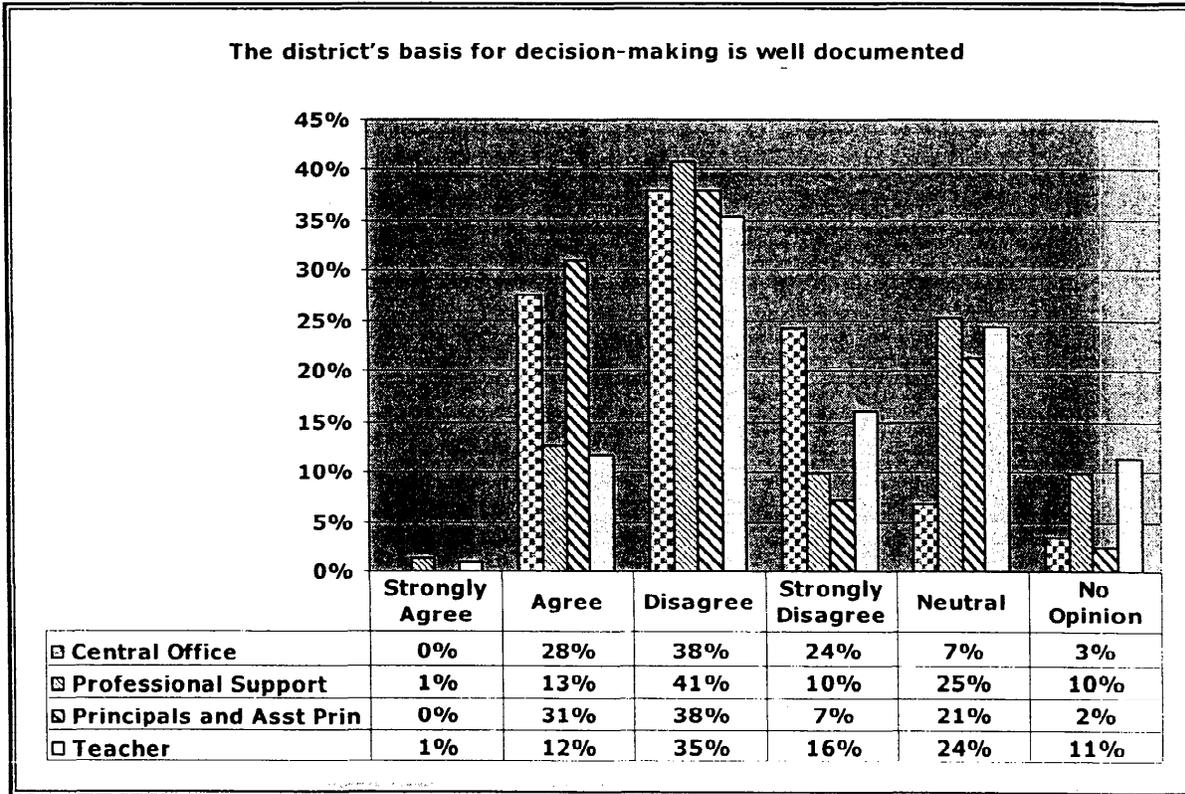
*The Superintendent or designee shall develop decision-making processes which are responsive to the school community and to the specific needs of individual students. He/she shall provide means by which staff, students and parents/guardians at each school may participate in decisions related to school improvement and matters which the Board identifies as appropriately managed at the school site level.*

Other Board policies address decision-making and school level decisions, requiring a single administrative system that supports decision-making at various levels. Administrative Board Policy 2000 Concepts and Roles states that:

*All schools and departments shall form a single administrative system organized so that appropriate decision-making may take place at various levels in accordance with Board policy.*

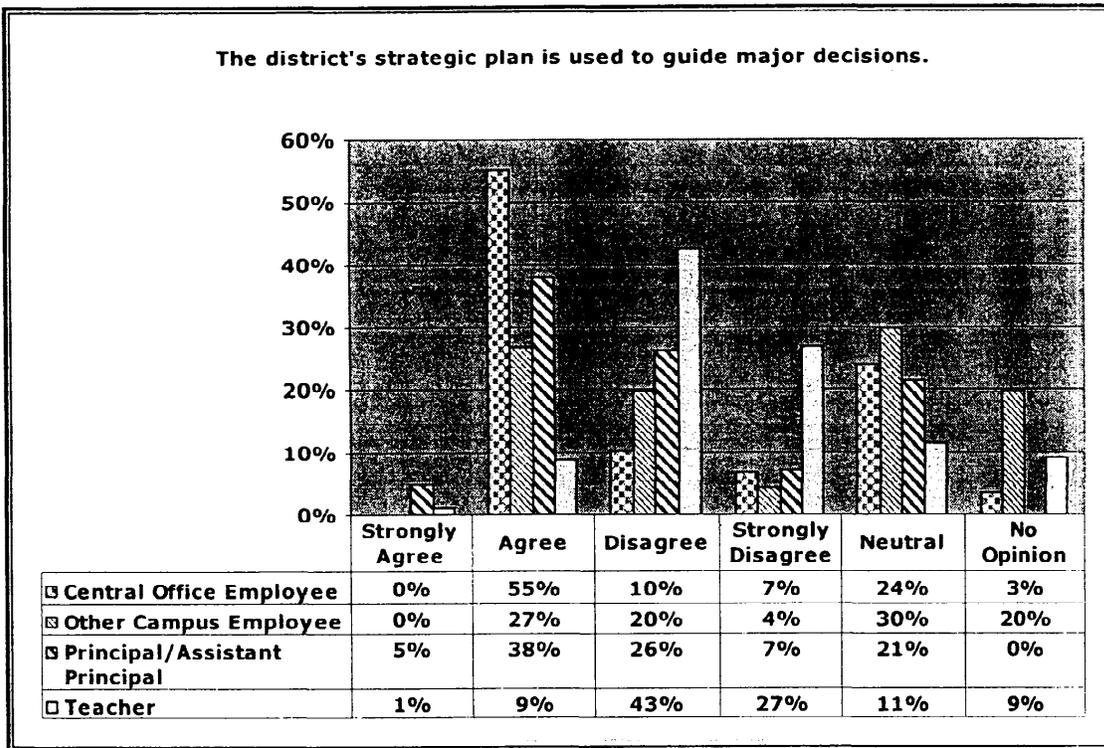
Most Pasadena USD employees believe that the District’s decision-making process is not well documented. **Exhibit 2-4** shows responses by employee categories. Principals and assistant Principals had the highest positive response rate of 31 percent and the lowest negative response rate of 45 percent.

**Exhibit 2-4  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Documentation of Decision-Making**



Pasadena USD employees differ on their perceptions of how the District strategic plan influences decision-making. **Exhibit 2-5** shows that 55 percent of Central Office employees believe that it does guide decisions, while 10 percent of Teachers shared the same opinion.

**Exhibit 2-5  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Impact of Strategic Plan**



There are several sources that address site-based decision-making. Site-based decision-making is a decision-making framework that determines what decisions can be made at a school site versus the Central Office, and who should be involved in the decision-making process. There are several components of site-based decision-making at Pasadena USD.

In California, schools are required by law (*Education Code 47605*) to have School Site Councils. These councils are established for the purpose of developing, recommending, monitoring, and evaluating the Single Plan for Student Achievement at the school, as well as decisions regarding categorical funds received through the Consolidated Application. These categorical funds, such as Title I funding, are generally designated for specific educational purposes, and their use is restricted by the funding source. School site councils consist of the Principal, Teachers, other school staff, parents and other community members, elected generally for two-year terms. With the exception of the Principal, school council members are elected by their peers. The School Site Councils are required to meet not less than monthly during the school year. Based on visits to campuses conducted during this study, the councils appear to meet the legal requirements.

Pasadena USD schools have internal management or leadership teams that work closely with School Site Councils. These teams are chosen by the Principal, and the composition of the leadership teams vary by school type and within school type based on the discretion of the Principal. While Board policy does not specifically address leadership teams, they represent a common and effective means for decision-making at schools.

A third element of site-based decision-making relates to provisions in the Teachers' contract. Article XIX of the current Teacher contract provides for the designation of a "Site-

Based Decision Making School.” Teachers at each school, with a two-thirds majority, may elect to initiate or terminate such a designation. The contract provides for a Site-Based Decision-Making Team consisting of Teachers, administrators, parents, community members and students – with a charge of developing a site-based decision-making plan. There is no reference in the contract regarding how this decision-making structure is to interface with other decision-making structures at the schools.

Article XIX, section 19.3.5 of the Teacher contract provides general guidance on the scope of decision-making for these teams.

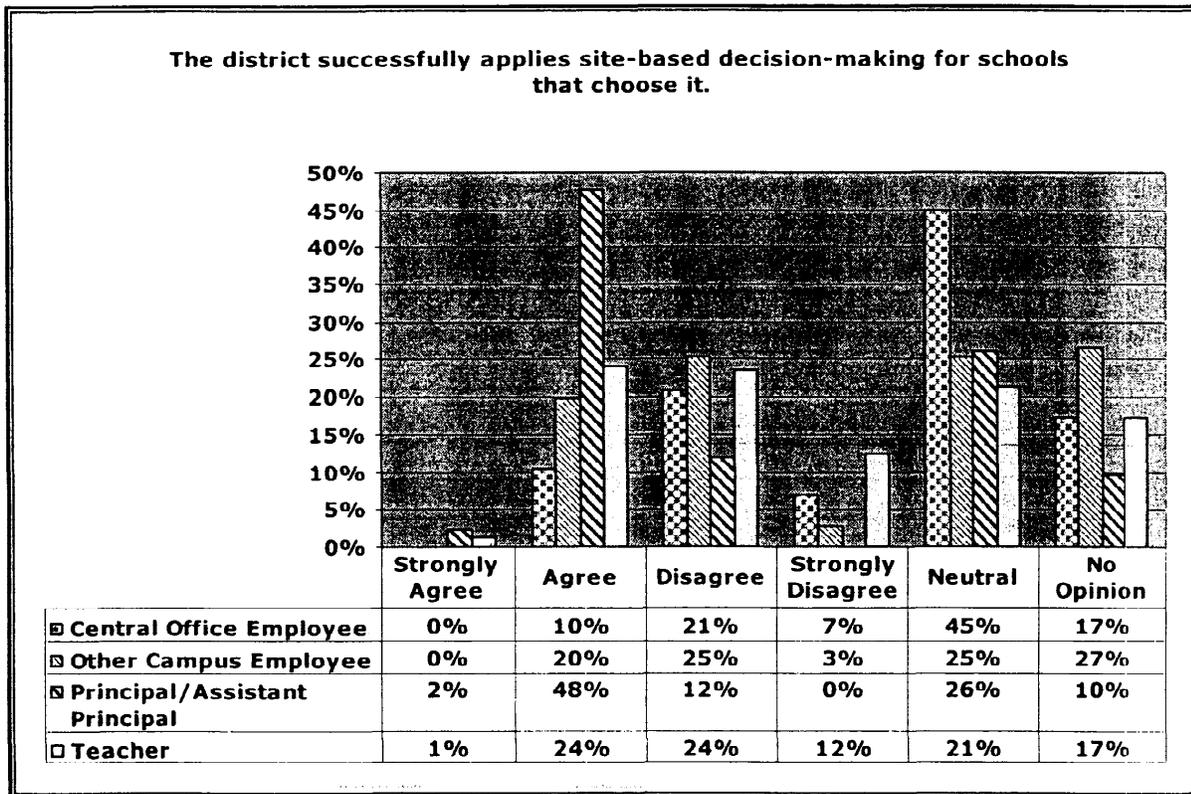
*Suggested examples of topics that the School Site-Based Decision-Making Team may wish to consider include but are not limited to: student discipline policy, staff development opportunities, school site schedules, instructional programs, support programs, community programs, communication networks, and creative and innovative site programs.*

*Areas outside the scope of School Site-Based Decision-Making Teams decisions include topics such as: employment personnel decisions, employee discipline, District leave policies, etc.*

Pasadena USD provided a list of 15 schools listed as “site-based” under these provisions. However, only one school visited had a “site-based” decision team as set forth in the contract. Some schools acknowledged being site-based but Teachers did not see the need for a separate team. One other school had formed site-based team in recent years, but disbanded it within a year because of its ineffectiveness. In two schools, there were differing perceptions by Teachers and school administrators as to whether or not the school was site-based.

In the survey, Pasadena USD employees were asked about site-based decision. **Exhibit 2-6** presents responses by employee group.

**Exhibit 2-6  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Site-Based Decision-Making**



There are several interesting attributes of this response. Almost 50 percent of Principals and assistant Principals believe that the elective site-based decision-making is successfully applied, while less than 25 percent of Teachers shared the same opinion. Sixty-two percent of Central Office employees were neutral or had no opinion, as well as 52 percent of other campus employees. Based on information obtained from campus site visits, Principals viewed site-based decision-making, generically, as an integral part of the campus decision-making framework, but used other decision-making structures to apply it.

**Recommendation 2-7: Pasadena USD and the Teachers’ union should negotiate to remove site-based provisions from the Teacher contract.**

There are several factors supporting this recommendation:

- The concept of a site-based election for each school is inconsistent with Board policy that requires a single administrative system supporting decision-making.
- Having multiple decision-making options at schools – that can change annually based on an election – creates the potential for a dual and unstable decision-making environment. All schools should operate under the same decision-making framework.
- Teachers and other school staff have the opportunity to serve on School Site Councils or school leadership teams – and be involved in decision-making.

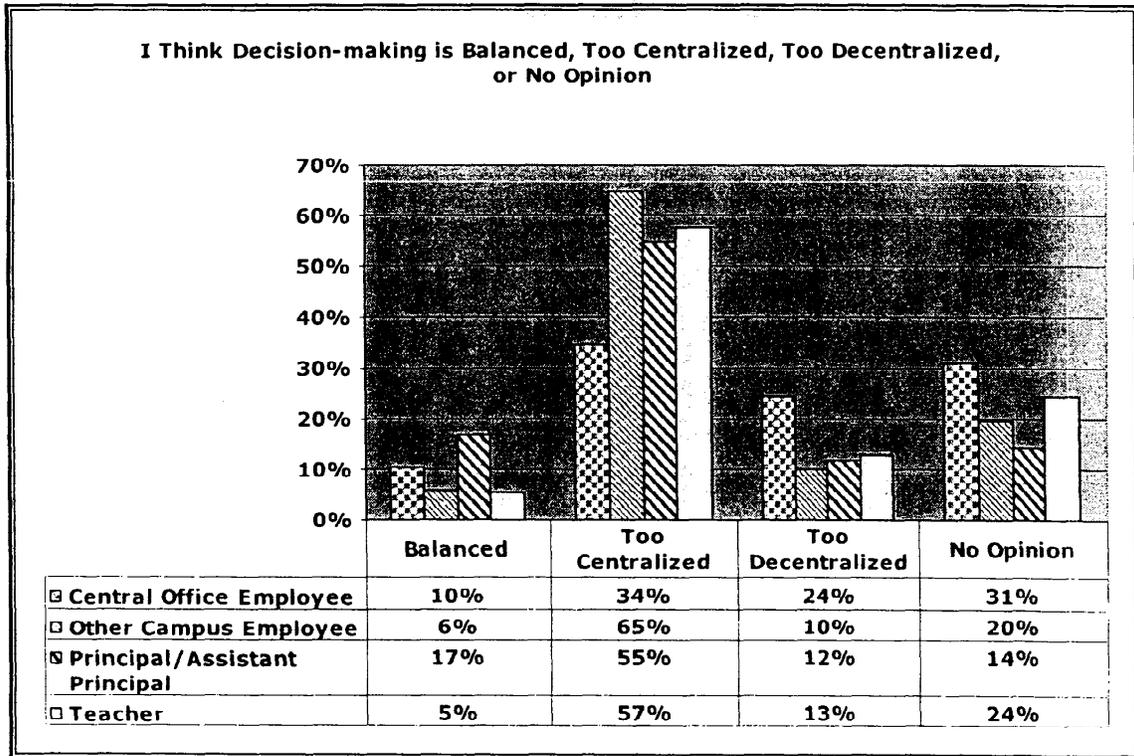
- Article XIX, Section 19.3.4 of the Teacher contract specifies that 90 percent of the Site-Based Decision-Making Team must agree to recommend an action. Further, the school Board can override the action with a majority vote.
- The scope of decision-making in the Teacher contract is not specific enough to avoid confusion over who has the authority to make what decisions.
- The practice is not being applied now at Pasadena USD, and there were no significant complaints about its absence.

There is no discernible difference in how Central Office oversees or supports the currently designated site-based versus non-site-based schools – nor should there be. Pasadena USD and the Teachers’ union should negotiate to remove site-based decision-making from the employment agreement, and both should be involved in the implementation of the following recommendation.

**Recommendation 2-8: Adopt a policy that documents a single decision-making framework for all schools.**

There are fairly wide opinions about how Pasadena USD makes decision. Employees were asked whether they viewed District-making as balanced, too centralized, or too decentralized. **Exhibit 2-7** presents the results by employee group.

**Exhibit 2-7  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Site-Based Decision-Making**



During campus visits, a checklist of representative decisions was reviewed with each Principal to identify to what degree the Central Office or the schools have the authority to make what decisions. This same list was also reviewed with Central Office leaders. The checklist addressed the following decisions:

- Curriculum / curriculum guides
- Course offerings (secondary)
- School calendar
- School bell schedule
- Class size
- Bus routes
- Cafeteria schedule
- Authority over custodians and how they spend their time
- Authority over food service workers and how they spend their time
- Work schedules for any categories of staff
- Number of work days per year for any categories of staff
- Block scheduling (secondary)
- Computers / servers
- Instructional software purchases
- Hiring school staff
- Establishing staffing needs
- Establishing non-staff budget needs
- Ability to re-allocate instructional and/or non-instructional staff to meet needs identified by school
- Benchmark testing (if applicable)
- School facility renovations
- Student discipline – code of conduct
- Student activity funds – software / processes
- Class rank determination / computation
- Identification of professional development needs
- Purchasing decisions as they relate to Teachers' or Principals' authority to select vendors, versus using the Central Office purchasing department or only pre-approved vendors

There were some variations from school to school, but overall the perceptions of school leaders were fairly consistent with that of the Central Office. There were also variances based on the tenure of the Principal in the District. Newer Principals are less familiar with the authority they have than more experienced Principals.

The perceptions of how decisions are actually made in the District were similar between Central Office and school staff; however, the opinions about whether the decision-making framework was too centralized or decentralized varied significantly. This is common in public education as school systems have struggled to implement an appropriate balance.

Some decisions need to be made centrally in order to provide consistent application and efficient operations at the schools and Central Office. Other decisions can and should be made at the school level. Documentation of a single decision-making framework will help ensure that all Principals and central administrators understand the ground rules for decision-making. Adopting it as policy will ensure its consistent use regardless of who is Superintendent. At a minimum, decisions should be identified in the following three categories:

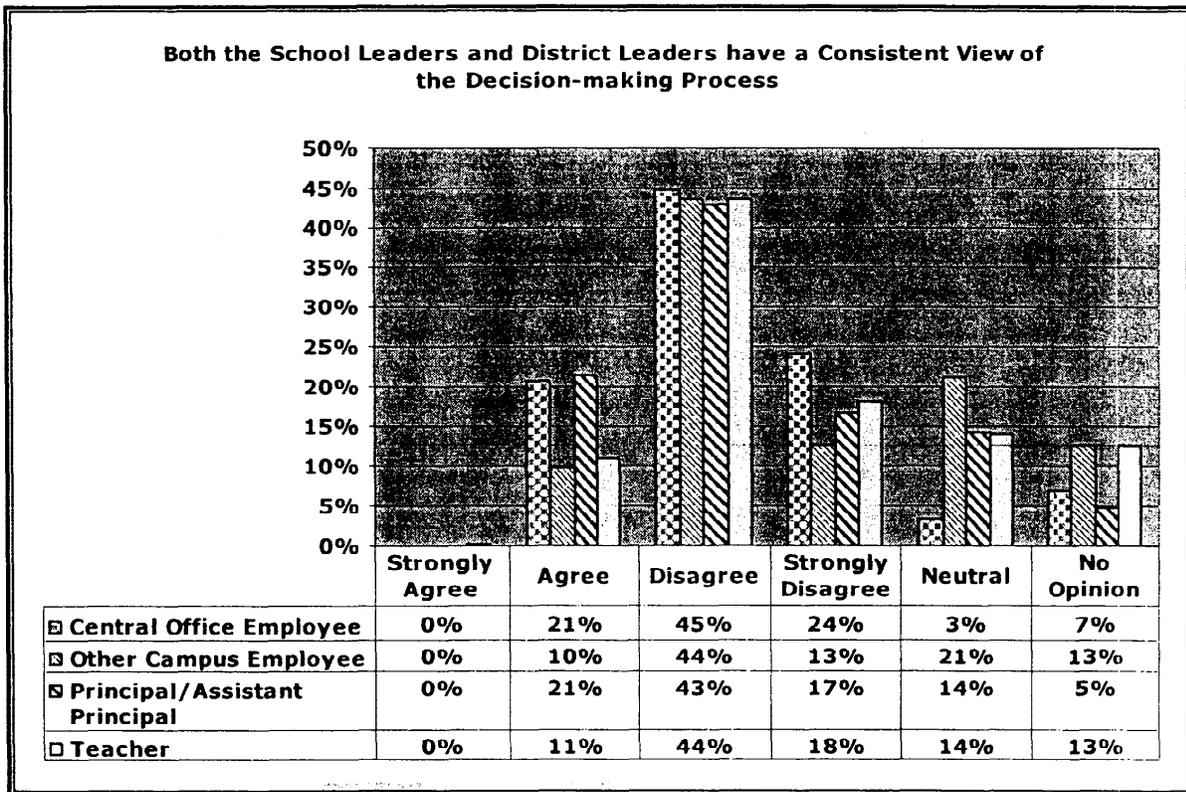
- **Site-based decisions not requiring Central Office approval.** Decisions that can be made or approved independently by Principals or their designees without intervention or approval required of the Central Office. These decisions might include teaching strategies used, certain disciplinary actions and assignments of special projects to staff.
- **Site-based selection from a list of District provided options.** Examples of this might include computer and instructional software purchases. Schools can be given choices of computer brands and software as long as they meet minimum specifications established by the Central Office technology function. Buying outside the list could result in the inability of the technology function to effectively support hardware or software. Selecting from a list provides decision-making flexibility within a framework that helps ensure District-wide efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Site-based decisions requiring Central Office approval.** Certain decisions, such as hiring or terminating school staff, should require the approval of the Central Office, as the Human Resources Department should be involved in these decisions to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and District policy.
- **Central Office decisions.** There are certain decisions that should be made by the Central Office and enforced at all the schools. A single standardized curriculum and the school bell schedule are examples of decisions that should be established, or standardized, by the Central Office. In making these decisions, however, the Central Office should solicit the input from schools to ensure that they make sense for the schools as well as the District. Obtaining stakeholder input in the decision-making process is discussed later in this section.

## **ANALYSIS OF THE DISTRICT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Different from the preceding analysis of policy, a "process" analysis of decision-making supports a more mechanical view of the various steps involved. This section provides findings and recommendations regarding process improvements for District-level decision-making.

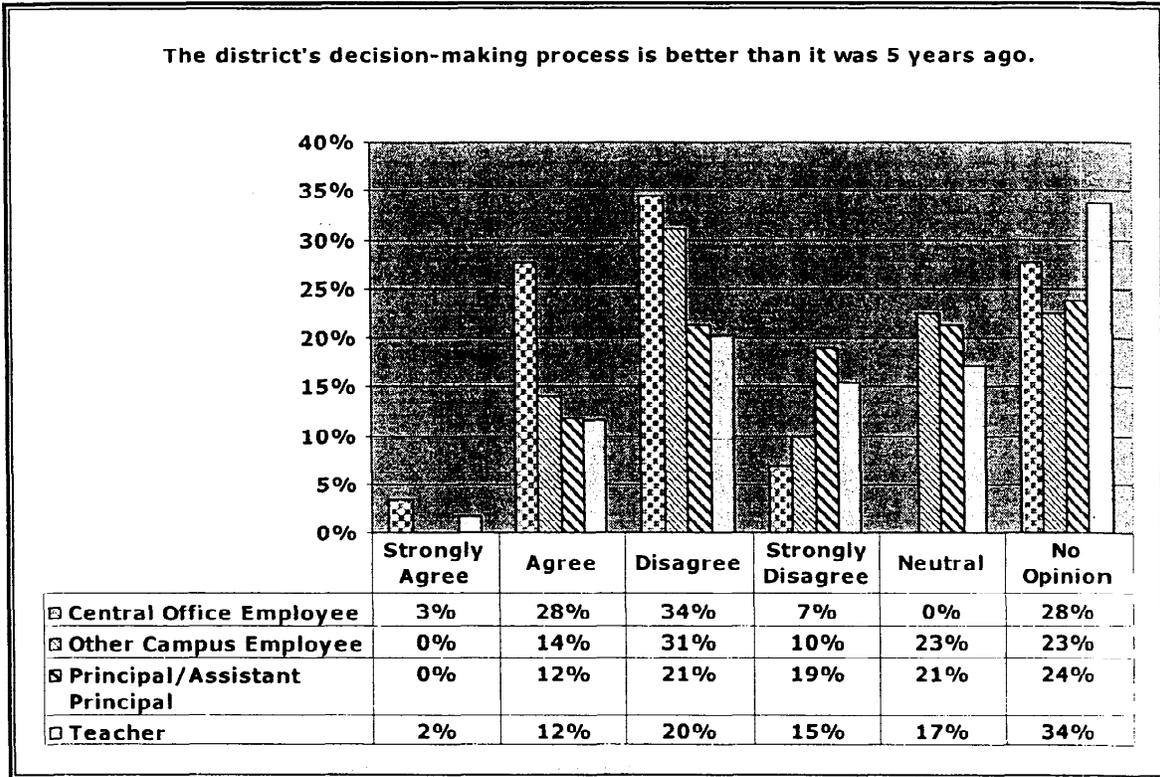
Pasadena USD employees' view of the District decision-making process was largely negative. **Exhibit 2-8** shows that District and school leaders differ significantly on how they view the process, suggesting that the process is not well understood.

**Exhibit 2-8  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
View of Decision-Making Process**



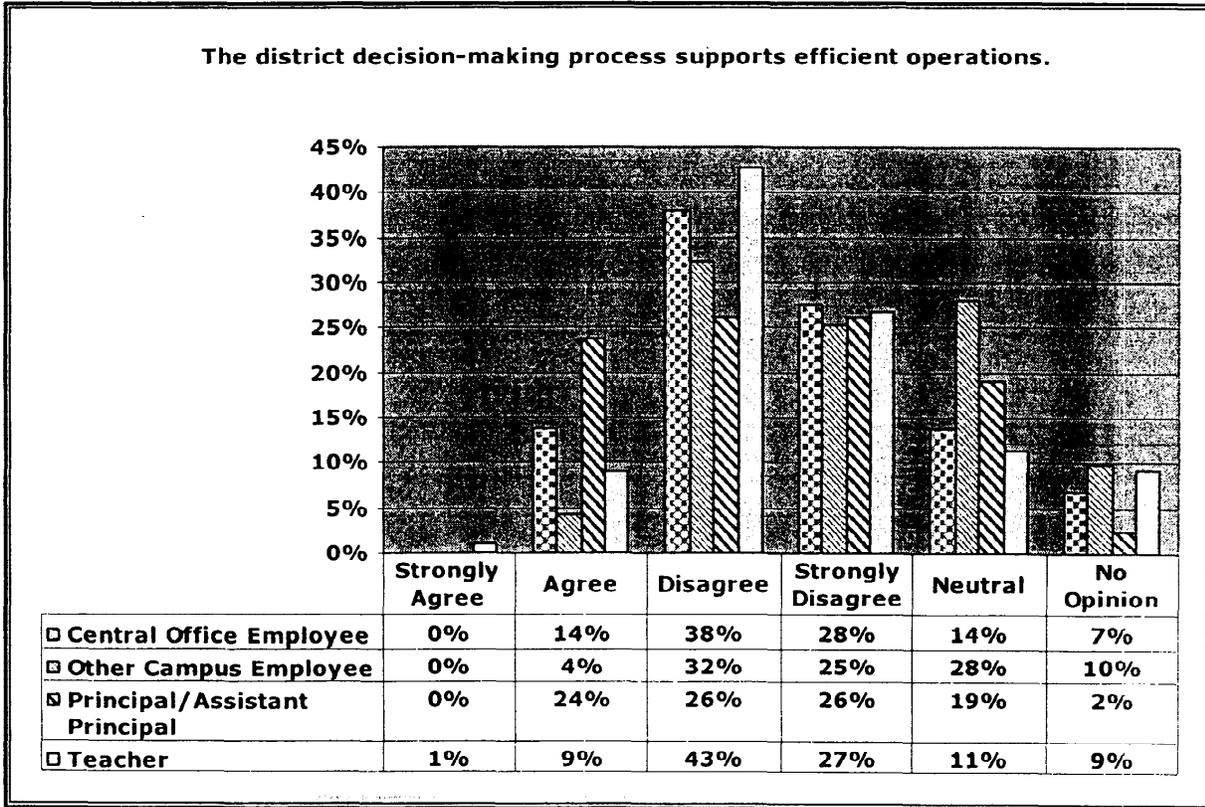
More employees also believe that the decision-making process does not work as well as it did five years ago. **Exhibit 2-9** shows that more Pasadena USD employees – in all categories – disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the decision-making process was better than it was five years ago. A large percentage of the respondents, particularly Teachers, were neutral or had no opinion.

**Exhibit 2-9  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Decision-Making Process Trends**



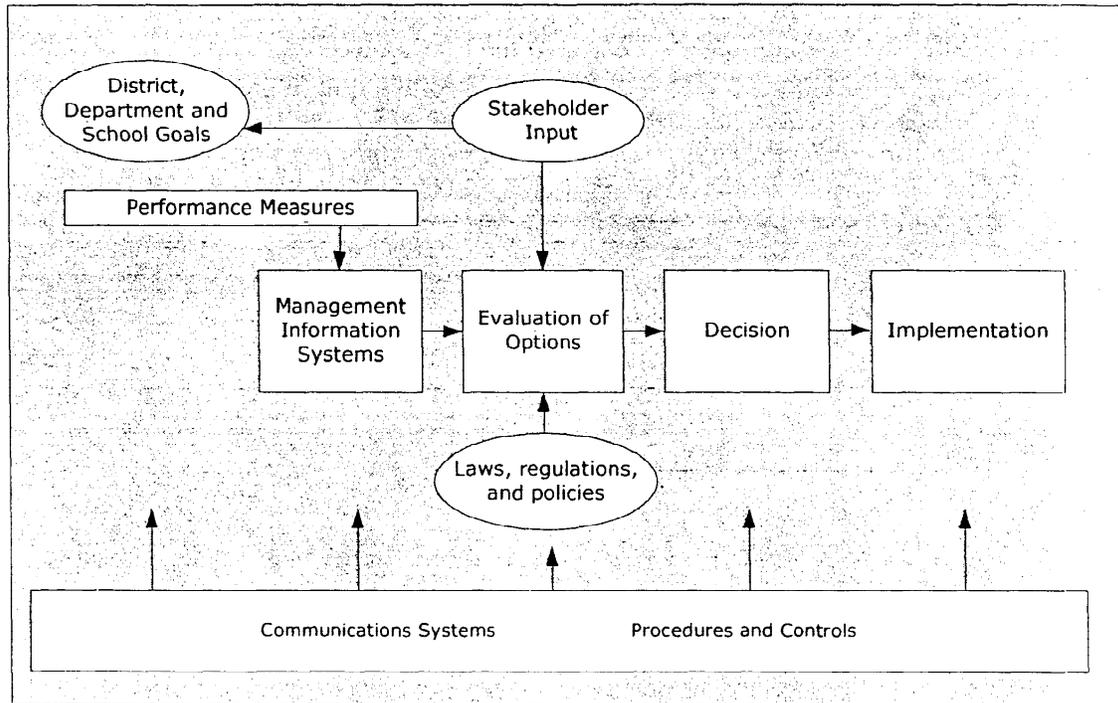
Most employees – regardless of the employee group – do not believe that the District decision-making process supports efficient operations. **Exhibit 2-10** shows the response rates by employee grouping.

**Exhibit 2-10  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Decision-Making Process Supporting Efficient Operations**



While each decision may follow a different "process" of being made and implemented, the approach used to analyze the Pasadena USD decision-making process was to map observations against a "best practice" approach. **Exhibit 2-11** depicts high level diagram of a best practice decision-making process. This diagram will be used throughout this section to reference specific observations.

**Exhibit 2-11  
High Level View of a Best Practice Decision Process**

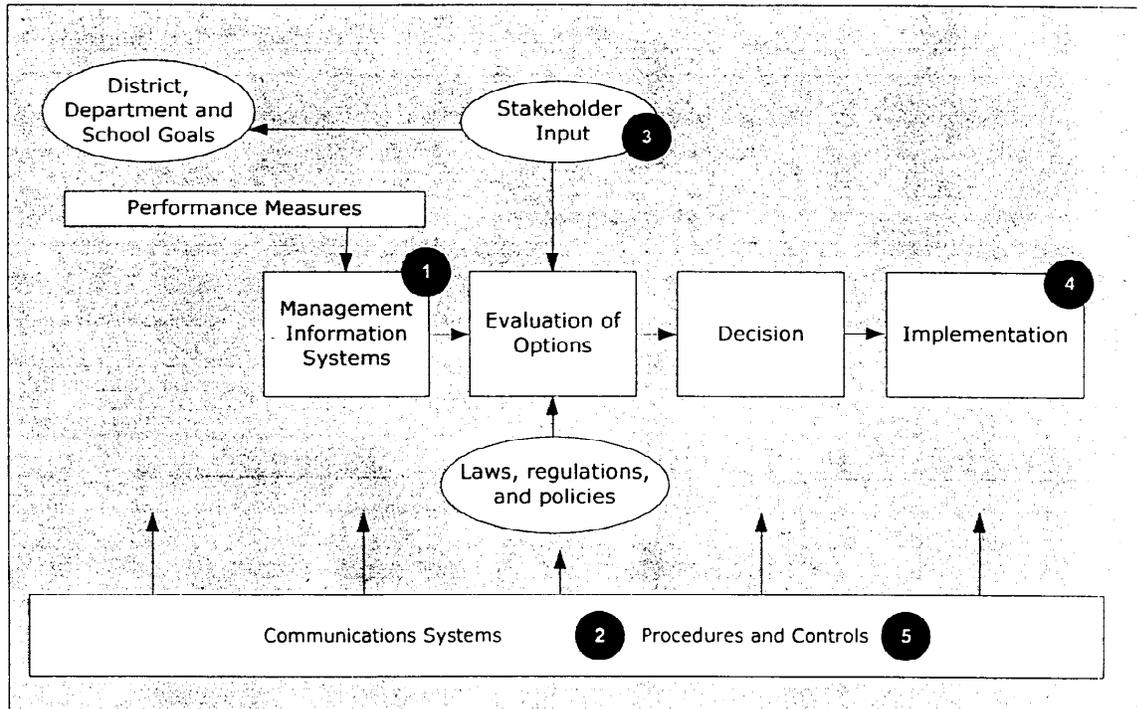


An effective decision-making process begins with the District goals. These goals drive specific, tangible measures of performance, and ultimately drive requirements for the District's management information systems. Management information includes the collection of applicable data and the conversion of the data into meaningful and relevant information to measure progress against a goal. Analysis of other management information may surface additional observations or findings unrelated to goals that might need to be acted on. The result of the analysis is the identification of a problem and its sources, and the subsequent development of alternatives to address the problem. Research is conducted, key stakeholders affected by the decision get involved, and a set of options is evaluated within the legal and regulatory framework. A decision is recommended, and made at a level of the organization that is consistent with District policy. Once decided, a decision is implemented based on careful planning, communication with stakeholders affected by the decision, and effective project management.

The entire decision-making process is directly affected by two major support systems - communications systems and procedures and controls.

While the effectiveness of the Pasadena USD decision-making process varies based on the particular decision being made, there are several deficiencies in the process and underlying support systems that inhibit decision-making. These are referenced in **Exhibit 2-12** and listed below. The remainder of this section explains each of these deficiencies by functional area and provides recommendations to address them.

**Exhibit 2-12  
Observations Regarding Pasadena USD's Decision-Making Process**



**1. Management Information Systems:**

- a. Management information systems are more advanced for instructional information than non-instructional.
- b. For several reasons, the technology infrastructure is highly unstable and subject to frequent crashes.
- c. The lack of a network operating system is limiting the ability to allow users efficient access to data needed to support decisions.
- d. District-wide reporting tools are underutilized or unused because of lack of training and/or lack of access.
- e. Core software applications used by Pasadena USD are less integrated and less functional than they were five years ago.
- f. Insufficient data is collected and analyzed to support certain decisions.
- g. Some analysis is perceived to be incomplete or skewed to represent more favorable results.

**2. Communications Systems:**

- a. The District phone system is outdated and does not effectively support efficient communications.
- b. The District's email communication system is not fully implemented and is not meeting the functional requirements of the District.

- 3. Stakeholder Input:** Key stakeholders are omitted from either the decision-making process or the communications loop.
- 4. Implementation:** Some decisions are not adequately planned or managed resulting in implementation missteps.
- 5. Procedures and Controls:**
  - a. Data integrity is at risk because of multiple data systems used to support the same transactions.
  - b. Job descriptions and procedures are incomplete and outdated.
  - c. Performance evaluations are not conducted frequently enough to support accountability.

### **Management Information Systems**

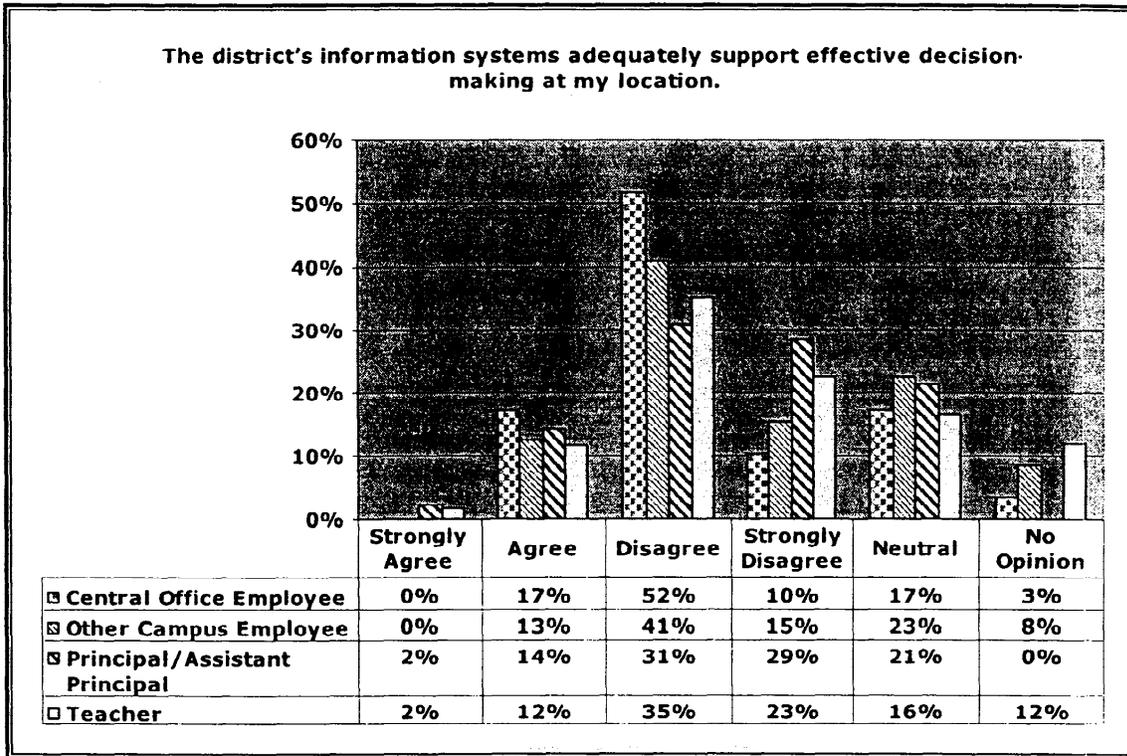
Management information systems extend beyond the District technology function, although technology is perhaps the most significant component. Collection of the right data and data integrity are also key aspects of supporting the decision-making process.

An example of a good management information system in place at Pasadena USD is the benchmark testing system implemented in conjunction with the standards-based curriculum. This system serves as an early warning system for low scores on state standardized tests in the spring by providing interim tests on specific state learning objectives throughout the year. Currently, only Principals and Central Office administrators have direct access to this system because of network capacity and other technology limitations discussed later in this section. This notwithstanding, the information is being used to make adjustments in teaching. While Teachers expressed some frustration in knowing what to do with the information, there was positive feedback regarding the value and usefulness of the data. To optimize this system, each Teacher should be able to access information and reports on-line directly from their classroom computer.

Non-instructional management information systems and deficiencies with the network infrastructure itself are adversely affecting the decision-making process more than any other functional area in the decision-making process. Virtually all issues identified during this study have been identified and prioritized as needs by the Information Technology Services (ITS) Department. However, due to budget limitations, these needs have not been addressed.

The impact of these deficiencies on participants in the decision-making process was apparent in the survey responses. As shown in **Exhibit 2-13**, less than 17 percent of employees in any staff category, including Teachers, believe that the District's information systems effectively support decision-making. This suggests that the District has work left to do in the implementation of its benchmark testing system.

**Exhibit 2-13  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Information Systems Support**



**Recommendation 2-9: Upgrade Technology Infrastructure.**

During Central Office and campus site visits, there were several instances of the network systems or subsystems crashing, affecting not only the decision-making process, but transaction processing and email communications as well. When the network was functional, some secondary schools experienced slower response times due to the limited capacity of the network's bandwidth.

The network infrastructure can be divided into two main categories: pipes that carry the information, and the hardware, such as routers, switches and hubs that help deliver and manage the information delivery. Excessive downtime and slow network speed are indicators that the network infrastructure is at risk. Pasadena USD has identified needs relating to both components of its network, although the equipment needs are perceived to be a higher priority.

In addition to network infrastructure, the District's servers also need attention. During the review teams site visit, the Central Office server room was toured. A professional data center/computer room typically has racked-style servers, multiple air-conditioning units with multiple back-up power supplies, waterless fire suppressant technologies, and sensitive heat and motion detectors. The Pasadena USD computer room has old equipment with insufficient capacity, no racks, one air-conditioning unit, no waterless fire suppressant technologies, and no heat or motion sensors.

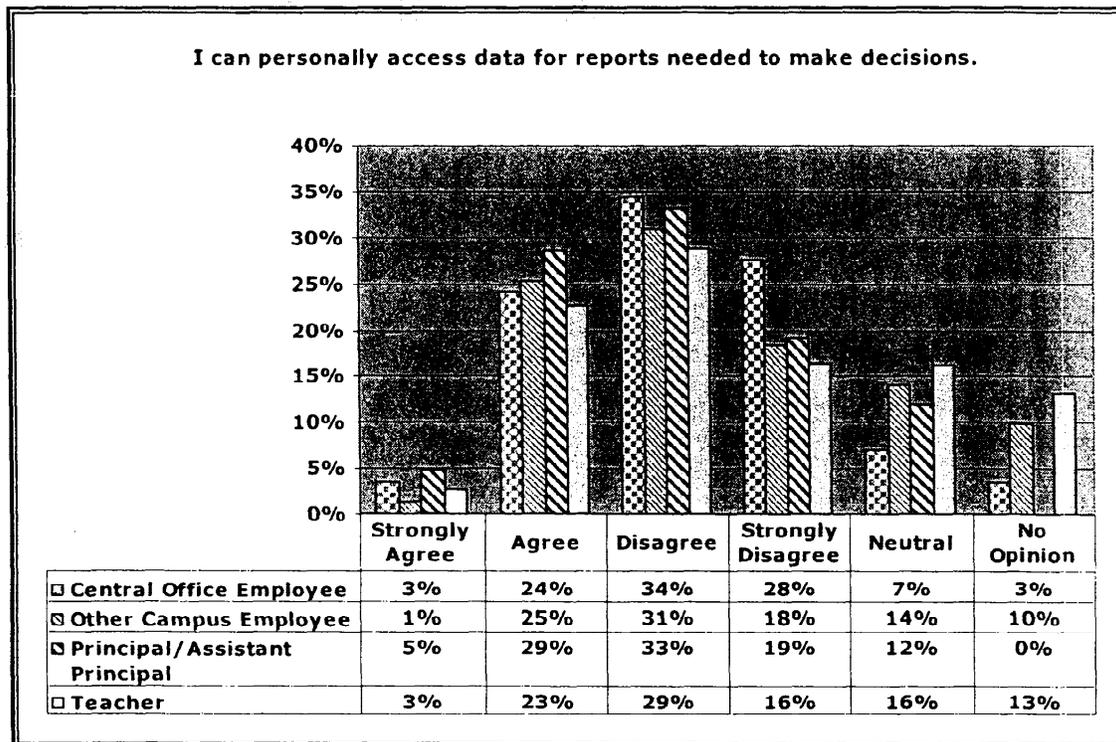
In addition to running out of physical storage space on its servers, Pasadena USD does not have a storage area network residing on its servers. This network allows users to save files to a personal drive that can be backed up daily by the Central Office. Currently, users are responsible for backing up their own files on a local drive.

District server needs have been identified as a high priority by ITS, but funds have not been allocated to address them. The issues with District servers, like the network components, contribute to a highly vulnerable and unstable technology infrastructure. While the scope of this study did not include a review of the technology function, it became apparent based on our limited work that the District is well beyond acceptable levels of risk with respect to its technology infrastructure.

Pasadena USD should dedicate resources to implement needs identified on the ITS list to upgrade the District's network infrastructure and server environment, and phone system. Cost estimates for these initiatives have been developed by ITS for both short-term and longer term needs.

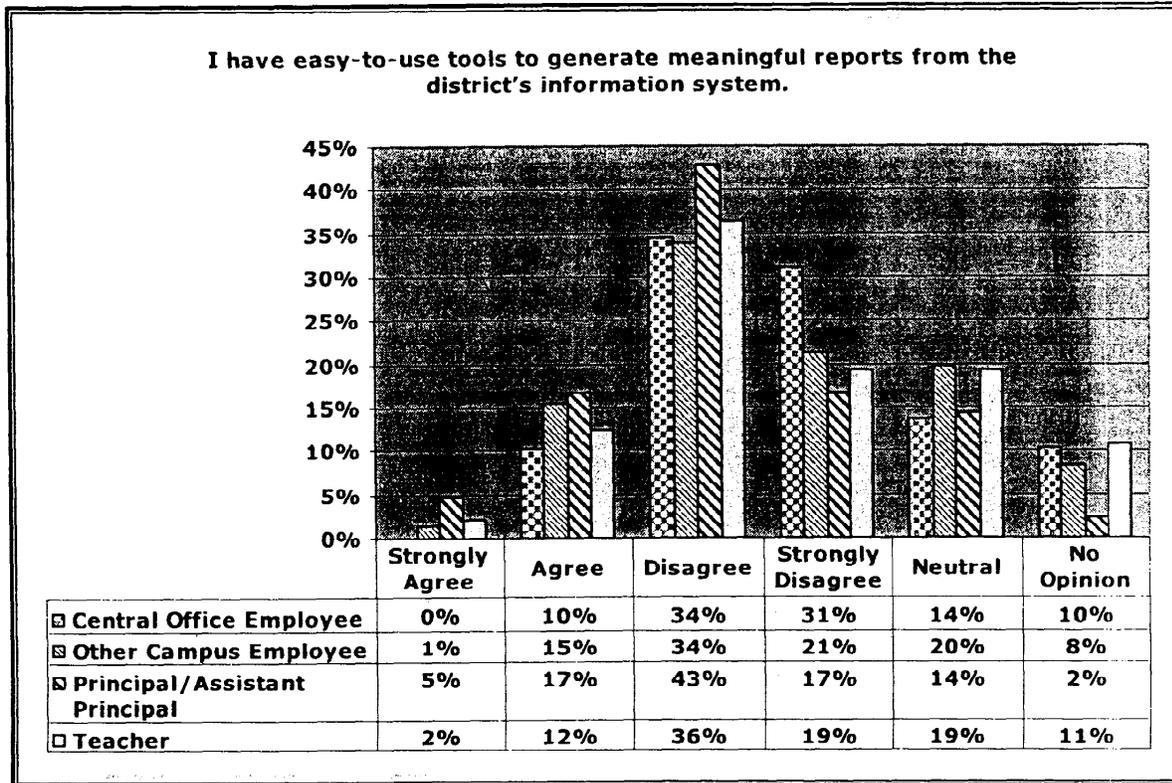
Separate from the technical issues, employees expressed concerns about the access to data needed to support decisions. As shown in **Exhibit 2-14**, approximately one out of four individuals responded that they could access data needed to make decisions. This was consistent among all employee groups. Interestingly, Pasadena USD's Central Office employees showed the highest percentage dissatisfied with data and report access. School Principals were slightly more satisfied than other groups. During campus site visits several Principals and Teachers provided positive feedback on the benchmark testing system reports.

**Exhibit 2-14  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Access to Data / Reports**



Another survey question asked about tools that were available to access reports. Pasadena USD has two reporting software tools, and employees also use other database and spreadsheet tools. **Exhibit 2-15** shows perceptions of reporting tools by employee group. While the "neutral" and "no opinion" responses were higher, the large majority of the remaining respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they have easy-to-use tools to generate reports.

**Exhibit 2-15  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Access to Data / Reports**



**Recommendation 2-10: Implement network operating system and role-based security structure.**

In 2004, COGNOS reporting software was purchased by the District and the District pays an annual maintenance fee of \$32,000. One of the District's goals with COGNOS was to provide Teachers, administrators and parents with the ability to access and analyze class and student performance. This system is significantly underutilized, primarily because of insufficient training and lack of access to the software. The lack of a network operating system limits the users' ability to access COGNOS, as well as other application and data bases. Users rely only on the operating system for their personal computer, and access to network systems are managed at the user level. As a result, users must enter passwords to have access to each individual system.

In a "best practice" situation, users enter one password for computer/ network access, and a single security system assigns rights based on predefined restrictions for that position. Network operating systems provide these benefits by supporting:

- Authentication – allows users to be assigned to groups that have rights to centrally stored systems, reports and data. Without a network operating system, users have access only to what is stored on their computer, or sent to them by another user.
- Authorization – assigns specific rights and access based on the specifications for that group. This role-based security structure allows information stored centrally to be managed centrally and more efficiently.

Pasadena USD does not have a network operating system or a role-based security structure, which today are basic components of information management. Most school systems with greater than 5,000 students have been using network operating systems for at least the past five years. This is a significant indicator of Pasadena USD being behind the times in information management. The lack of a network operating system is limiting the District's return on investment in other technologies that depend on it.

For those individuals that do have access to *COGNOS*, it was perceived to be a very sophisticated reporting tool, but difficult to use without proper training. For these reasons Pasadena USD has not achieved a return on its investment in *COGNOS*, and is not fully utilizing it to support data analysis and decision-making.

Because of the limitations of reporting through *COGNOS* (that had little or nothing to do with the software itself), the District purchased *Crystal Reports* software which was perceived to be less sophisticated but easier to use. The use of *Crystal Reports* is more common but because of the security issues described above, it is also underutilized.

***Recommendation 2-11: Refine long-term plan for application software and reporting.***

There are several other events that have transpired that have contributed to the current situation. The District purchased SchoolMax, a student information system (SIS) that is accessed through the internet. The advantage of this type of system was that the District would not have to maintain the hardware or database to host the system internally. The application resides in the vendor's data center and the District users access the application online. According to District technology staff, Pasadena USD is one of the biggest districts to use this application as a hosted application. Because of this, Pasadena USD's increasing reporting needs were slowing down system access for other customers and costing Pasadena USD additional money beyond the application hosting fees.

The current SIS cannot run some basic reporting functions provided by the previous SIS. Based on information provided by District and school staff, the District's previous SIS could print student report cards, sorted by zip code, allowing the District to bulk mail the report cards. The current SIS is not capable of printing report cards in the same way. As a result, ITS staff must manually sort the report cards after printing them.

The District became concerned about both the limitations of the new system and the additional reporting cost, and decided to purchase its own database to store the data and run reports. Each night, data is exported from SchoolMax – as well as other application systems – to the database. The District now runs direct queries and reports (through *COGNOS* or *Crystal Reports* in some cases) against this database to meet information needs for decision-making. This sometimes creates data integrity problems, because in-house database data is one day old and users may run reports off both systems during the day.

The end result is that the District is paying SchoolMax to host the data on its database, and is incurring duplicate costs to download the same data to an internal database for reporting. Other factors described above are further limiting the ability of employees to use these tools.

The District finance and human resources systems are also fragmented. Pasadena USD uses selected PeopleSoft (now a part of Oracle) modules of the Los Angeles County Office of Education's (LACOE) business application. According to staff interviews, Pasadena USD is one of the largest districts that uses this hosted application from LACOE.

The Human Resources is a text-based (green screen) module, indicating that is an outdated version of the software and has not been upgraded by LACOE. The budget, accounting and payroll modules are Windows-based, indicating a more current version in use. Due to District budget limitations and the functional shortcomings of the LACOE applications, ITS has developed its own custom systems for time cards, sick leave and vacation tracking, and purchasing and warehouse. ITS, school staff, and other Central Office staff incur additional time ensuring that all of the modules interface with each other and that data and transactions are accurately recorded. An example relating to payroll changes is provided below:

- School administrative staff completes a manual form monthly entitled "Classified Monthly Payroll Time Report."
- Data on this form is entered by school staff into a Unisys application (used by Human Resources) as opposed to the PeopleSoft system (used by the Payroll Department).
- The Pasadena USD Payroll Department does not have access to the Unisys system, and developed a separate spreadsheet template to collect the same information from schools for entry into the PeopleSoft system.
- The code options for the Unisys application are not the same codes as the PeopleSoft system. Accordingly, a considerable amount of time must be spent by Payroll Department staff and school staff to reconcile the data.

The impact is that the same data is entered four times for one transaction: (1) the original hand entry on the form; (2) the computer entry of the form onto the Unisys system; (3) the entry onto the spreadsheet template; and (4) the entry of the spreadsheet template by the Payroll Department onto the PeopleSoft system. Because of this type of transaction processing, the District is facing serious risks in terms of data integrity, timely data access, and data redundancy. Data integrity is also discussed later in this section under ***Procedures and Controls***.

All the technology issues described above adversely affect Pasadena USD's decision-making process. Excessive downtime and slow response times of an unstable infrastructure, limited access to data and reporting tools, and an overly fragmented approach to application software impair the quality and timeliness of data, the completeness of the data analysis supporting decisions, and the ability to communicate effectively via email.

### ***Communications***

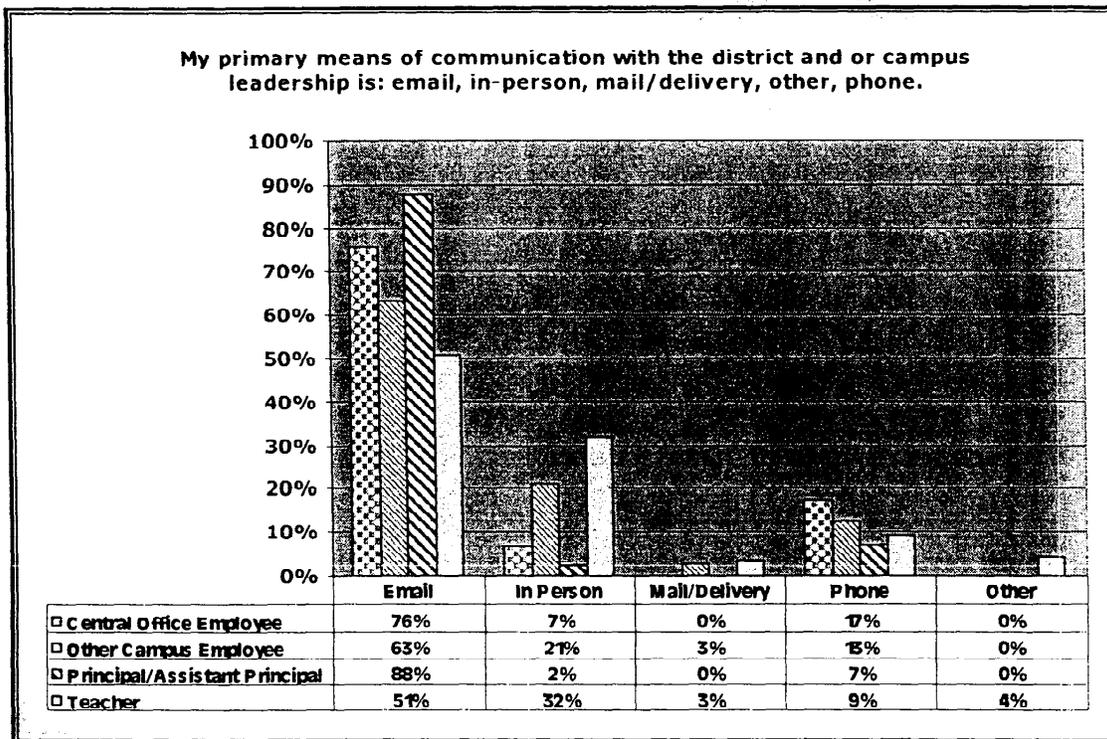
Technology is closely related to communications at Pasadena USD in that the District's technology infrastructure supports email communications, and to a lesser degree its phone

systems. This section addresses the various forms of communications used by Pasadena USD that support decision-making.

**Recommendation 2-12: Require all Teachers to use District email.**

District employees were asked through the on-line survey what their primary means of communication was. **Exhibit 2-16** presents the results by employee group. The vast majority of Central Office staff and school leaders (77 and 99 percent, respectively) use email as the primary means of communication. Only 51 percent of Teachers, however, reported using email as the primary means of communication.

**Exhibit 2-16  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Primary Communication**



There appear to be several reasons for the relatively low use of email by Teachers, based on interviews with school and ITS staff and review of technology need lists:

- Some Teachers do not have a functioning computer.
- Some Teachers have a functioning computer but with an outdated operating system than cannot run the current email program.
- Some Teachers choose not to use email, even though they have access to it.
- Some Teachers use only personal email accounts.
- Some Teachers did not receive a user ID or password to access their email. In some instances the ID's and passwords were not distributed by the school administrative staff.

ITS has a goal of having 75 percent of all Teachers connected to the District’s email system during 2006-07. The goal for 2005-06 was 50 percent, and that target appears to have been achieved based on the survey results. The impact of inaccessibility to email is that many Teachers do not receive communications that are relevant to District and school decisions. On several occasions Teachers expressed concerns about parents finding out about District news through the newspaper before Teachers were informed.

Survey questions also addressed Central Office staff effectiveness in communicating with District employees and the community at large. **Exhibits 2-17 and 2-18** show the results by employee group.

**Exhibit 2-17  
Pasadena USD Employee Survey Response  
Internal Communications**

