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SITE-BASED DECISIONS

House Bill 4240 as introduced
First Analysis (9-27-95)

Sponsor: Rep. William R. Bryant, Jr.
Committee: Education

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Section 1202a of the School Code says, "The board of a school district shall ensure that decisions made at the school building level are made using site-based decision making that includes the participation of teachers, school administrators, parents, pupils, and others in the school community." The provision was added as part of Public Act 335 of 1993 (House Bill 5121), which made a great many amendments to the code. Critics of the provision say that it destroys the authority and responsibility of school principals. They also say the provision has been used mischievously to make the voluntary participation by teachers in the school improvement process a matter of collective bargaining.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would repeal the requirement in the School Code that decisions made at the building level be made using site-based decision-making involving teachers, school administrators, parents, pupils, and others in the school community.

MCL 380.1202a

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency reports that to the extent a school district made expenditures related to site-based decision making, there could be savings from repeal of the provision. (Fiscal Note dated 9-25-95)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Critics of the recently added site-based decision making requirement say that it weakens the authority of school principals. The provision is so broad and so open to interpretation as to its meaning that it provides an opportunity for mischief rather than any useful guide to how certain kinds of

decisions need to be made. The matter of how "building-level" decisions are to be made is best left to local school districts to determine. They can provide for collaboration between administrators, teacher, parents, and students. The mandate is not helpful. Critics allege that the requirement has been misused by teachers to negotiate participation in mandated school improvement planning. (It should be noted that Section 1277 of the code, which deals with school improvement plan, says that plans should address building level decision making, among many other matters.)

Against:

It is not clear what problems have occurred as a result of the site-based decision making requirement. The aim of the requirement is to ensure that decisions made at the building level are collaborative; that teachers, parents, and students are able to participate in decisions that affect the community life of a school, and that administrators are not the sole decision makers. It would appear that this kind of decision making is local decision making at its most basic, even if it appears in state law. Proponents of the provision say that it has worked to bring more parents into school decision making, which has been healthy for schools. It is hard to take concerns about collective bargaining problems seriously as regards this provision, they say, since state law has recently been amended to weaken teachers unions and require them to accept the last best offer of school boards. If there are problems with this provision, which has barely been put into practice, if it is too broad or vague or open to misuse, then it should be amended to solve those problems. It is extreme to simply toss the provision out.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Association of School Boards has indicated support for the bill. (9-26-95)

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The Michigan Association of School Administrators has indicated support for the bill. (9-26-95)

The Michigan Federation of Teachers is opposed to the bill. (9-26-95)

The Michigan Education Association is opposed to the bill. (9-26-95)