CSF

GAME EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE--

SCHOOL BOARDS, TEACHERS

341 - 67

AUTHOR: S. ETTER

COMMUNITY SYSTEMS FOUNDATION

Game for 6 people -- 3 school board members, 3 teachers.

Each player represents a constituency, as follows:

School Board Members

Player #1 represents Ward 1, the oldest and innermost section of the city. Ward 1 is made up of a fading central business district, some heavy industry, and a rather small but very densely populated residential area. The residents include almost all the city's Negroes and Mexicans. Most are tenants occupying substandard housing. The school-age portion of the population is disproportionately large, and many households are highly mobile, moving from state to state in pursuit of seasonal work. These people pay very little property tax, but need increased and improved school services. Schools in Ward 1 are old, pupil achievement is low, teacher turnover is high, and dropout and delinquency rates are soaring. Most Ward 1 taxpayers are landlords and businessmen who live in other parts of the city.

Player #2 represents Ward 2, which consists largely of old but respectable middle-class residential neighborhoods, interspersed with zones of light industry. Property values are stable and most homes are owner-occupied. The age composition is varied, and there is a substantial number of young families with school-age children. Most parents have finished high school, but few have gone farther. The people in Ward 2 tend to be cautious and politically conservative, but they are generally supportive of education.

Player #3 represents Ward 3, which is the least homogeneous part of the city. Ward 3 includes an old area of small homes, owned and occupied largely by retirees with fixed incomes and no school-age children; and a recently annexed area consisting of a shopping center and two subdivisions of new, large, expensive houses. This part of Ward 3 is inhabited by successful businessmen and professionals who are well informed and much interested in school affairs. Their eagerness to improve the city's educational syatem is in sharp contrast to the attitude of the citizens in Ward 3's old section, who are extremely conservative and who regard every millage proposal as a potential drain on their small resources.

Teachers

Player #4 represents young teachers new to the system. Some have taught elsewhere, but none has more than 5 years' experience. Prime concerns for these teachers, who are not yet committed to remaining here, are a shortened salary schedule; paid-up health insurance; meaningful in-service training programs on a paid or released-time basis; and, especially for the men, clearly stated requirements and non-arbitrary procedures for promotion to supervisory and administrative positions.

Player #5 represents those teachers whose jobs either wholly or in part can be called "special" or "extra-duty." Included are psychological testers; traveling art, music, physical education, speech, and reading teachers (elementary); secondary school coaches, band teachers, newspaper and yearbook supervisors, and counselors. Chief concerns for these teachers are maintenance

and extension of the schools' special programs and services; and, in the case of part-time classroom teachers, extra pay specifically for their extra duties.

Player #6 represents long-time employees of the system who have made or will make a career of teaching in our city. These teachers share the interests of Players 4 and 5, but are inclined to think in longer range than either of the other groups. Matters of money and internal management (personnel policies, relations with administration, etc.) are of vital interest; but curriculum revision and reform, suitability of the program to the students' needs both in school and after graduation, and recognition of teaching as a profession seem more important. These are people who have "taken the vow"; they will not quit their jobs to earn $200 or $300 more elsewhere (though a much larger gap may make a move irresistible). They have built family as well as occupational attachments in the city and would prefer to remain here and work to improve the system from within.

Each player's job is to use whatever power he has or can command to shape the city's school system in the best interests of his constituency. Re-election as school board member or teachers' bargaining representative depends on constituency satisfaction. Issues to be decided will fall into three major policy areas, defined below.

Policy Areas

1. Money

Decisions must be made about expenditure of available operational funds and about requesting additional millage. Bond issues and construction or building-and-sites matters will not be dealt with, since they do not usually involve teachers. Teachers' salary schedule and fringe benefits, instructional supplies, and some aspects of working conditions (teacher-pupil ratio, teachers' free periods, team teaching, etc.) fall into Policy Area #1. In most cases, decisions about working conditions will come under Policy Area #2, but will overlap into #1 if expenditures are involved.

2. Internal Management

Problems about relationships between school board and teachers, board and administrators, and administrators and teachers are included in this Policy Area. Procedures for salary negotiations, adjustment of grievances, and other personnel policies are the most likely issues.

3. External Relations

Relationship of the entire school system to the community is covered here. Public satisfaction with the school program and activities, athletic performance, accreditation, graduates' success in college and employment, and teacher "image" are some sources for problems within this Area.

Each team's satisfaction level, or extent of achievement, in each Policy Area is defined on a 10-point scale. The scale looks like a thermometer, and moves up or down are recorded after each round of play. As a rough indication of the meaning of actual points

on the scales, three positions for each are outlined below. 10-8 points means position A; 7-4 points means position B; and 3-0 points means position C.

Teacher Positions for Policy Area #1

A. Salaries and fringe benefits are high, and not below those of surrounding areas.

B. Salary schedule is mediocre--not the worst in the state, but in need of improvement.

C. Salary schedule is bad--low starting pay, too many steps, few or no fringe benefits.

School Board Positions for Policy Area #1

A. Salaries and fringe benefits competitive with other cities of similar size and with surrounding areas, covered adequately by available funds.

B. Salary schedule not competitive though budget is balanced; new teachers avoid the city.

C. Teacher salary demands, under threat of mass resignation, have forced deficit spending. Continued operation depends on passage of large millage proposal.

Teacher Positions for Policy Area #2

A. Paid, full-time executive secretary is spokesman for organization. Written personnel policies, accepted by school board and binding upon both sides, which outline procedures for all foreseeable problem areas.

B. Classroom teacher acts as executive secretary for organization. No written policies, but both sides usually behave honorably according to established practices. Teachers are vulnerable, however, unless their requests are mild;

board can become arbitrary or refuse to meet with organization representatives.

C. No executive secretary. Open hostility between the two groups. Communication is poor and board formulates policy without consulting teachers' organization.

School Board Positions for Policy Area #2

A. School board outlines procedures and personnel policies which are acceptable to teachers.

B. No set procedures. Board usually prevails in face of teacher opposition, but teachers cry foul in public and sometimes arouse popular sentiment against school board members.

C. Teachers' organization dictates personnel policies and negotiating procedures which severely limit school board authority, under threat of mass resignation.

Teacher Positions for Policy Area #3

A. The teaching profession is well regarded locally; teachers are satisfied that, for the most part, they are doing their jobs well.

B. Teachers are patronized; their judgment is not sought or recognized as relevant in civic issues. Many students are apathetic to school program and teachers feel frustrated in attempts to teach them what they need to know.

C. Teachers popularly regarded as incompetent babysitters. Public dissatisfaction with schools is high and drop-out rate climbs steadily.

School Board Positions on Policy Area #3

A. Low drop-out, juvenile delinquency rates; good support for teams, school program in general; graduates seem adequately prepared for college and jobs; high success with millage proposals.

B. Some public dissatisfaction with school programs and services. Drop-out and delinquency rates rising but not yet alarming. Every millage campaign is a struggle, but so far all schools remain open and salaries paid.

C. Board deluged by public complaints. Mothers, civil rights groups picket schools. Drop-outs and delinquents burden the community, and the last three millage proposals have been defeated. Some schools are running double sessions, and high school course offerings have been pared drastically.

The Game

Each player begins the game with five red chips, and each has a list of all possible issues. Each side, school board and teachers, has three thermometer-like scales, one for each Policy Area, all set at 5 (Position B). Or, for players representing actual districts, the scales may be set at those points which best describe their own situations.

Players are also provided, at the beginning of each new round, with a news sheet summarizing External Forces. The sheet will include current information describing local, state, and national business climates, legislation, cost of living changes, civil

rights activity, local tax situation (city income tax, property re-assessments, bond issues, millages).*

Each round of play begins with introduction of an issue, chosen for consideration alternately by players from each side. (Players 1, 4, 2, 5, 3, and 6.) After discussion and consideration of External Forces, any player may move to pass, defeat, or table the issue. A time limit of 10 minutes on discussions might be necessary. Tabling is achieved by majority voice vote with no abstentions; other decisions are made by betting chips for or against the motion. Everyone must play on every issue, and every player's object is to bring his team's satisfaction level as close to 10 as possible on all three scales, and to satisfy his constituency well enough to be re-elected.

The Chips

The red chips represent a player's power to shape decisions. Since, despite all, the school system must go on, neither side can ever become completely powerless; nor can either side amass unlimited power. Chips lost on an issue do not go to the winning side, but into a "goodwill fund" or reserve for the losers. These chips are regained gradually, one chip per player per round.

The players' chips do not, however, represent the total

*I hope a method can be devised which will make it possible for pressure of External Forces on each group to vary inversely with that group's "satisfaction level." The assumptions are: 1) a community accustomed to a good school system and fairly high level of educational expenditure will be willing to maintain the level even when other financial pressures grow; and 2) a well-organized teachers' group will be able to exert more pressure to achieve its goals than a loosely joined aggregate when local financial conditions become adverse.

power available. Community organizations and interest groups also have power; and if all three players on a side agree to invest in an outside group, that side can recall its investment with interest on any issue. Two ways of symbolizing the interaction with community groups have suggested themselves. One is quite simple and would be easy to incorporate into the game, but seems to me to oversimplify the relationship. Using this method, the rate of return on investments is as follows: 3 chips (the minimum) invested for one round yields 4 chips the next round, 5 the next, and 6 the next. Total return cannot exceed 6 chips, no matter how long the period of investment. Some community groups cannot yield the maximum return because they don't have enough power themselves. Investments cannot be made and recalled in the same round. A sample of community groups and their available "capital":

Civil rights activists - 3

Council of Churches ---- 2

Chamber of Commerce ---- 7

Labor Council ---------- 7

A more sophisticated and more realistic method for symbolizing the power trade, though it might prove too difficult to implement, would be one in which the investments would have probable, not guaranteed returns. Such a method could allow for two factors which are evident in real-life situations but are not built into the first model: 1) the phenomenon whereby a group that is perceived as powerless (e.g., a poorly organized body of teachers) is unsuccessful in attempts to trade support with other groups; and 2) the real uncertainty that accompanies any actual power trade.

The Master Chart

The list of issues before each player corresponds with a master chart which everyone can see. (Issues are not written out on the master chart, but are represented by colors and numbers -- a different color for each Policy Area and a number for each issue within an Area.) The master chart illustrates the relationships among the issues by indicating how passage or defeat of one issue affects the outlook for others. For instance, if teachers have just won a major salary increase which uses most of the currently available operational money, their chances for substantial enlargement of fringe benefits or extension of special services personnel diminish sharply for the present. At the same time, the school board's chances for full teacher cooperation on the next millage campaign and, hence, its likelihood of passage, increase. After a decision is made, the issue values on the master chart will be changed to show the impact of the decision in the following way: next to the symbol for each issue on the chart is a space for the number of chips needed to "win" on that issue. In the above example, values for teacher fringe benefits and more special personnel would go up perhaps 5 chips each, while the cost of success in the next millage campaign would go down 2 chips. External Forces also affect the master chart.

Ideally, the master chart should also reflect the pressures built by sheer weight of time. For example, if teachers' bid

for a salary increase is defeated three years running, pressure for its passage becomes overwhelming.

Constituency Satisfaction

If two rounds pass without a player's having done something specifically desired by his constituency, according to the constituency descriptions, (this can mean simply playing his chips in a way his constituency would approve, regardless of the outcome of the issue) he collects a black chip. The second black chip means he has not been re-elected or re-appointed. If extra players aren't available to fill vacancies, each player keeps count of such losses for evaluation of his performance at the end of the game.

Susan Etter
August 7, 1967

Educators' Game Report
Master Chart

The master chart is intended to show how passage or defeat of any of the twenty-nine measures listed will affect the chances for passage or defeat of all the others. The numbers and values (positive or negative) show how the margin of votes (or chips) needed for passage of any given measure changes with the passage or defeat of another. The margin needed for passage on each issue at the beginning of the game is listed in the extreme right column.

For example, if the players vote by a margin of at least 15 chips (right column) to establish libraries in the elementary schools, the number of chips needed to approve a fixed schedule of pay for extra duties increases from 10 to 12; if, however, the school libraries proposal is defeated, the margin needed for approval of an extra-duty pay schedule decreases to 8.

Each time an issue is passed or defeated, its effect on other issues should be recorded on thermometer-like scales visible to the players. All issue values are cumulative, for the round of play but cannot go below zero or over 100. Issues once passed cannot be raised again, during the game though other issues may be proposed recurrently regardless of previous defeats.

Premises underlying the chart's construction

The numbers in the chart are, I believe, reasonable representations of the kind and degree of interrelationships among the issues listed, given the following conditions of the game:

1. The players have a total of 60 chips in any one round, and there is 100 chips' worth of influence available from other community groups.
2. Each round of play consists of 6 issues, one proposed by each player. The scarcity of chips and sizes of

margins needed for passage of issues should determine priorities within a round and stimulate cooperation -- or, more realistically, "deal-making."

3. The board has a limited supply of operational funds. The amount is not specified, but should be evident from the chart. In any one round, then, it will be extremely difficult to make more than two or three large expenditures such as acceptance of the teacher's salary schedule, reduction of class sizes, or improvement of the remedial and terminal education program. The funds supply will be replenished at the end of each round, as indicated by the return of all issue margins to their starting points.

The issues

1. Six elementary schools request libraries. Both space for library rooms and funds for books are needed.

2. Teachers request a fixed pay schedule for extra duties, such as coaching, producing school plays and newspapers. At present, individual agreements for such extra-duty pay are made between teachers and the board.

3. Teachers' salary schedule proposal has 4 main points: a) raise first step of schedule; b) shorten schedule; c) increase per cent of annual increment; d) add the step of M.A. plus 15 hours to schedule.

4. Teachers and some parents request a textbook for every child in every subject. At present there are no language or social studies texts for elementary grades and about one-third of secondary school classes have only enough books for in-class use.

5. Millage. When board feels the need for more operational funds to carry out programs, it must gain wide support from teachers and the community to increase school tax levy.

6. Teachers request that board pay teachers' health insurance.

7. Board and teachers, and some parents, feel the need for a clear policy on student pregnancies. Two things must be decided: a) how long may a pregnant student attend classes; and b) how soon after birth will she be allowed to return.

8. Board and parents want a clear policy on teacher pregnancies. Specifically, they want an enforceable rule on how long a pregnant teacher may remain in the classroom. Honor system hasn't worked, since many teachers desirous of working longer and earning more, have been less than candid about their expected dates of delivery.

9. Teachers request better-equipped, more uniform teachers' lounges. New buildings have adequate facilities, but lounges in old buildings are cramped, inadequately equipped, and in some cases, nonexistent.

10. Teachers request a preparation period for junior high and elementary employees, but not at the expense of lengthening the school day. They ask 45 minutes daily for junior high teachers and one-half hour daily for elementary teachers.

11. Teachers request an increase in the clerical staff, so that more of the teacher's school day can be devoted to actual teaching. At present, attendance records, inventories, book distribution and collection, and funds collecting occupy too much class time, teachers feel.

12. Teachers and some parents want class sizes reduced by an average of 7 pupils per class. Strain is greatest on kindergarten, early elementary, and high school terminal or remedial classes, which currently enroll as many as 37 pupils in some cases. Immediate demand is for a ceiling of 25, with eventual reduction in kindergarten and remedial classes to 16.

13. Teachers request more special or traveling teachers -- i.e., elementary language instructors, art, music, speech, and remedial reading teachers. The classroom teachers feel these subjects could best be taught by those professionally prepared in these areas, and that they then could devote more time to and get better results from regular curriculum areas.

14. Teachers request more released time than the current two days allowed for inservice training and workshops in curriculum areas.

15. Teachers' association wants substitute teachers paid on contracts after two weeks in the same position. At present, the $19-a-day rate continues regardless of the duration of the appointment.

16. Teachers and some board members want to establish a joint teacher-board curriculum committee to supply constant evaluation of the curriculum and to study and recommend changes. At present there is no formal or authorized ongoing curriculum study group.

17. Teachers, especially in junior high, request an increase in the counseling staff. Elementary teachers would also like a visiting counselor. At present, only some high school counselors are full-time employees; there are no elementary counselors, and

junior high counsebrs are half-time teachers with counseling loads averaging 500 pupils each. Junior highs want at least one full-time counselor per school. (Junior high enrollments range from 800 to 1100 pupils.)

18. Teachers' association requests that hiring standards for teachers be raised so that no person may be hired without a minimum of a B.A. and a provisional certificate. At present about one-fourth of the total staff is non-certificated, without a degree, or both.

19. Teachers request a district-wide coordinator for each grade or subject taught, to ensure curriculum continuity.

20. Teachers' association requests written personnel policies, including standard procedures for dismissal, promotion, transfer, reprimand, and suspension of teachers.

21. Teachers want a written grievance procedure, binding on both sides, to ensure uniform fairness in disposition of teachers' complaints.

22. Teachers want tenure committees composed of experienced teachers and building principal only; evaluations conducted regularly and openly with results available to the probationary teacher; and adverse evaluations and recommendations subject to grievance procedure.

23. Local civil rights groups agitate for immediate replacement of high school history and civics texts, which, they say, unfairly minimize the contributions of Negroes in American history.

24. Parents, civic groups, and some teachers ask for curriculum proliferation to include electronics and auto mechanics for the high school, and introductory economics for elementary grades.

25. Parents strongly request noon and after-school supervision of school playgrounds, which in some cases have served as convenient hangouts for bullies and undisciplined groups of teenagers. Teachers have not performed this duty for several years because no extra pay was involved.

26. Parents and some teachers most strongly urge an improved remedial and terminal education program. Both groups feel that

a more energetic and more realistic program of study for students who are low achievers or who plan no education beyond high school would substantially alleviate the drop-out problem and better equip graduates for employment.

27. Some parents and teachers want a stronger, more academic college preparatory program. They feel that with college entrance requirements rising, students who are not thoroughly grounded in academics will have little chance for college success, even if they are admitted.

28. Several parents' groups request more summer school, both remedial and enrichment, for all ages. They urge full utilization of available federal funds for "Get Set," "Head Start," "Stand Fast," and other similar programs.

29. Parents' groups, beginning on the high school level but now extending to junior high and elementary, demand that contents and work requirements be standardized for comparable courses. This movement is the result of a series of complaints about "unfair" homework loads and inadequate preparation for succeeding courses in a sequence.

For Game Chart-- See Master Library Copy

Community Systems Foundation
2200 Fuller Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan