



## **SHARED DECISION-MAKING MODEL**

*Adopting a shared decision-making model creates a streamlined, consensual decision-making process for site-based decision management with clear lines of responsibility and access for all members of a school community. Everyone has a voice represented by his or her team leader. Team Leaders have the authority to represent their teams in school-wide decisions.*

## **ASSUMPTIONS IN SHARED DECISION-MAKING**

It is essential to understand that in an organization of any size everyone must trust each other and must delegate different tasks to folks interested in seeing them through, and trust that those folks are doing their best to represent their colleagues.

There is no possible way for any one of us to be involved in all the discussion and details of all the committee action and initiatives going on in a school. So the price we pay for lots of activity and positive progress is that we can't all know enough about each initiative to make the best decision for the whole school. We have to trust those who have spent the time, done the research, debated the issue, surveyed the folks, and then done their level best to come up with the best recommendation to best serve the entire school program.

### **Areas Covered By Our Shared Decision-Making Model Are:**

Issues, Program, Policies, and Procedures

Initiators to Address Above:

- Individual
- At-Large Advocate
- Team Leaders
- Subject Area Specialists
- Standing Committees
- Administrators
- Counselors
- SIT (Student Intervention Team)
- Site Council (PTA)

### **Administrators**

Administrators have decision-making authority in personnel related matters covered by contract including, but not limited to, schedule assignment and supervision of classroom teaching. They also have the authority to re-channel any proposal that is a direct violation of school board policy, state law, or administrative contract responsibilities. Ultimately the principal is held accountable for the decisions made by the school.

## **Team Leaders as the Building Leadership Team**

By adopting this model, a school has agreed that the Team Leaders will function as the “Building Leadership Team” because it best facilitates consistent communication and authentic involvement and/or representation for every staff member in school-wide decisions.

Team Leaders have the authority to represent their teams in school-wide decisions where they have gained consensus from members of their team formally or informally. (More description under “Team Leaders-Definitions and Responsibilities”)

## **Team Leaders- Definition and Responsibilities**

Team Leaders are selected by the principal and are responsible for coordinating the instructional efforts of their individual teams. In addition, they are responsible for representing the views of their individual team members on school-wide policy, program, and procedures through our consensus decision-making model.

Team Leaders receive a stipend for carrying out these duties and are evaluated annually as to their effectiveness in so doing. It is recommended that Team Leaders serve a maximum of three years in order to give other staff members the opportunity to serve.

The Site Council Chair is also a member of the Team Leader group and is elected by the Site Council members according to the Site Council Bylaws. Recommendations from the Site Council will be taken to the Team Leader meetings. Recommendations brought will go through the standard decision-making process.

## **PROCESS OF REACHING A FINAL RECOMMENDATION**

### **(PROCESS EXPLANATION)**

#### **Definition of Consensus**

Consensus, in its simplest application, means exactly what it implies, namely, “I consent to this” or in a staff setting, there is a general agreement or accord. It may also be defined as a two-thirds majority consent vote if a ballot vote is called for to resolve any issue.

In this model it means that all staff have been given an opportunity to express their points of view. The committees or groups charged with presenting a final recommended proposal are responsible for drafting a proposal which best represents a majority view. They are also responsible for including and discussing minority viewpoints so that their final proposal is a best effort at having

considered all points of view and fairly representing them through the process of deliberation and discussion.

If the minority view was not incorporated into the final recommendation to the minority proponent's satisfaction, they may continue to lobby or persuade in an effort to move the majority view to their point. However, once a consensus decision is made, it is expected that though they didn't prevail on a particular point, they will support the majority view.

**EXCEPTIONS:** If a minority viewpoint can argue to his/her colleagues that the recommended proposal is a violation of your school's ethical, moral, or philosophical base, then the recommended proposal could be sent back to the drawing board to consider those concerns. This argument would have to be asserted prior to a ballot vote being taken. See the section labeled "Safeguard for Expression of Minority Viewpoints." The second exception would occur when new information becomes available that would significantly impact the recommendation. The staff, as a whole, or team leaders on the staff's behalf, would discuss and make the decision to reexamine the proposal should these issues be raised.

### **Protocol for Bringing Items Forward**

**Step 1.** Agenda items related to any issues, program, policies, and procedures will be submitted to Team Leaders, the Principal, and the At-Large Advocate. All Team Leader meetings are open to all staff or parents who wish to attend as observers, though any staff member or parent wishing to add an agenda item to the Team Leader Meeting should do so through the aforementioned parties. Agenda items are due two working days prior to the Team Leader meeting.

Building Operating Principles should be followed before agenda items are added to the Team Leader Meetings. It is the role of the Team Leaders, Principals, and the At-Large Advocate to ensure that the Operating Principles are followed prior to an item being placed on the agenda.

### **An example of following this process using the Building Operating Principles as applied to adding agenda items to the Team Leader Meeting is as follows:**

**SITUATION EXAMPLE:** A staff person disagrees with a policy or decision or implementation of a policy or decision by a team leader, committee chair, subject matter specialist, or administrator.

- a. The staff person should use the "Care to Confront" model, maintaining confidentiality and refraining from counter-productive personal comments. (See the "Care to Confront" description on this website for more detail on this point.)

- b. The staff person should set up a one-to-one mutually agreed upon meeting time with the party in question to discuss the issue, clarify any questions or disagreements, attempting to establish a mutual understanding or decision regarding the issue.
- c. If both parties cannot agree upon a solution a third party (Team Leader, At-Large Advocate, or Administrator) should attempt to mediate the dispute.
- d. If all three parties agree that the team leaders should decide the issue, then the Team Leader, Administrator, or At-Large Advocate should place the matter on the Team Leader Meeting Agenda.

**Step 2.** Team Leaders will determine how long the period of time for feedback/decision making needs to be. (Timeline)

**Step 3.** Team Leaders should take the item back to the team for discussion. The item and its description will also be published in the Team Leader minutes. It is ideal that the team reaches consensus on the issue.

**Step 4.** Team Leaders represent their team's position and feedback on the issue at the next/ appropriate team leader meeting.

**Step 5a.** Team Leaders make a recommendation based on the feedback from their teams. Final recommendations will be published in the Team Leader minutes and distributed to all staff.

**5b.** If the minority viewpoint of any staff member(s) was not incorporated into the final recommendation, they may continue to lobby or persuade in an effort to move the majority view to the point. However, once a consensus decision is made, it is expected that though they didn't prevail on a particular point, they will support the majority view. The at-large representative is the representative responsible for bringing forth these viewpoints at the team leader meeting.

**5c.** It is the responsibility of any staff member(s) who cannot accept the decision to file a "Statement of Concern." See the "Safeguard for Expression of Minority Viewpoints" section for elaboration on this point.

**Step 6.** Final recommendations will be published via Team Leader meeting minutes. A two-week period will pass before the formal adoption of any recommendation. This allows adequate time for a Statement of Concern to be filed if necessary. The only exception to this timeline is an event that necessitates an emergency decision or a decision that requires immediate response. In the event of an emergency or the need for an expeditious programmatic decision, an emergency staff meeting will be called to make the decision. The Site Council Chair will be notified of such a meeting so that he/she may attend.

## **Recommendations Brought Directly to Team Leaders**

Final recommendations may be brought to an administrative/team leader group. That group may recommend acceptance, revision, or further discussion with the major goal being to reach a consensus decision or move to the action step in a timely fashion.

It is the responsibility of the team leaders to make sure that the interests of both their individual teams and the school program overall are reflected in any final recommendation from any group.

## **Recommendations Brought Directly to the Entire Staff**

When a recommendation is presented to the whole staff through a staff meeting format, consensus is necessary to adopt the recommendation. Consensus is defined as “Calling for the Question” and requires a two-thirds majority vote to approve the recommendation as submitted.

## **Safeguard for Expression of Minority Viewpoints**

*When a decision is made a statement describing the decision and the proposed date of implementation will be announced/published to the entire staff.*

*It is the responsibility of any staff member who cannot accept the decision to file a “Statement of Concern.” (At the end of this document). The Statement of Concern should also include a rationale that outlines reasons for opposition to the decision. It may also include suggested revision or alternative solutions that would address the issues involved.*

**At-Large Advocate:** The staff will elect one staff member per year, for one term, whose responsibility will be to represent any staff member requesting representation when filing a Statement of Concern to the Team Leaders. The advocate will be elected by a two-thirds majority vote. The advocate should attend all Team Leader meetings.

The Statement of Concern would be submitted to the Team Leaders for review. The recommended decision would be revisited, and the concern would be given consideration.

If the Team Leaders view any proposed changes as being significant to the extent that the recommended decision needs revision, the revised recommendation would go back to the teams for approval.

In order to ensure that the decisions are made in a timely way, once a Team Leader recommended decision has gone through the review process, individuals or an individual who continue(s) to maintain the same concern can call for the

question. A two-thirds super majority vote of all staff, as outlined in our decision-making process, would be necessary for the decision to be approved.

### **Implementation of Decision**

Once a decision is made it will not be subject for revision or review for one calendar year unless otherwise stipulated (e.g., a review at the semester).

### **MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS SYSTEM OF DECISION-MAKING**

1. Follow our operating principles.
2. Start from the assumption that - no matter the issue - we're all trying to do our best, and therefore give kids our best. Disagreements are usually over the how to do it, not over what we are trying to do.
3. "Care to Confront" one another. A school with no conflict or disagreement is usually a school that's not doing very much.
4. Trust that each person, whatever the assigned role in the decision-making process is trying to do the best he/she can equitably deliver service or implement a policy that works best for all.
5. Communication - Read the published minutes, attend meetings, read committee minutes, respond to surveys, express your opinion, know what's going on, and when a particular decision that affects you will be made.
6. Accept that your individual responsibility in this model means that you are both an individual and team player. You can support the majority on some issues, even though it is not exactly how you might do it. It's a two-way street. You can ask for support for something you want to try in exchange for the support you give. It is called teamwork.
7. This model is open to review each spring and will remain in place until an alternative model that addresses the above stated criteria receives a two-thirds majority in its favor.
8. It is recommended that the BLT and staff receive training on the decision-making process as needed or appropriate.

### **The Shared Decision-Making Model needs to meet the terms of the District Education Contract an example is outlined below:**

"For purposes of collaborative site-based decision making, each building will establish its own committee structure that works for its own staff. At minimum,

the Building Leadership Team consists of the principal and at least (5) staff. The decision-making process should be communicated to the entire staff. The Building Leadership Team must be selected by a process that is supported by a general consensus of staff at the school.”

Other building-based committees that the building may wish to form are:

- A staffing committee to discuss staffing issues and to form and coordinate hiring committees.
- A budget committee to develop budgets corresponding to the building’s allocation from the Weighted Student Formula.
- A curriculum committee to coordinate work on the Academic Achievement Plan and to monitor student achievement and the impact of the curricular revisions at the building level.
- A building and logistics committee to focus on issues pertinent to the physical plant.
- A mission/vision/values committee to address broad issues of the work environment and the school’s direction as a performing organization, a workplace, a member of the community, and a part of the team focused on student achievement.
- A parent/community relations committee to coordinate parent and community involvement.

Building committees and the membership of committees must be determined by a process that is supported by a general consensus of staff at the school. Failing a consensus, the building committees and membership shall be determined by the Building Leadership Team.

The Building Leadership Team and building committees shall include paraprofessionals, office professional staff, parent/family members, students, and community representatives as appropriate.

Building-based committees will seek input from other organizational structures (e.g., PTA, site council) as appropriate.

At the request of the school, Unions and the District will jointly provide training in site-based decision making. In addition, the Unions and the District shall jointly seek resources for assisting building or program staff in gaining skills in conflict resolution.



To be adopted, this Shared Decision-Making Model needs a minimum of two thirds vote. To be changed, a two-thirds vote is necessary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS BROUGHT TO THE SITE COUNCIL**

It is important that parents function as active partners in our school. It would therefore be appropriate for Site Council (PTA) to generate recommendations, as it would be equally appropriate for staff as a separate entity to submit recommendations to Site Council. Such recommendations would be forwarded to the Team Leader meeting for consideration and go through the standard decision-making process.

The reality is, however, that staff members are an integral part of the Site Council. Therefore, if we do our job well in communicating and resolving concerns as partners as we progress on various initiatives, we will avoid the serious problems that can result if folks feel that all we do is process - without reaching resolution and action steps.

Both parents and staff members need an established sense of trust and respect for the roles they play as parents and professional educators in their efforts to determine and deliver the best possible programs for every child.

The Site Council Chair is a member of the Team Leader group. The Chair is responsible for representing the Site Council interests to Team Leaders as part of the decision-making process.

## ***Statement of Concern***

*“When a decision is made a statement describing the decision and the proposed date of implementation will be announced/published to the entire staff through the BLT minutes.*

*It is the responsibility of any staff member who cannot accept the decision to file a “Statement of Concern.” The Statement of Concern should also include a rationale that outlines reasons for opposition to the decision. It may also include suggested revision or alternative solutions that would address the issues involved.*

The Statement of Concern would be submitted by the At-Large Advocate to the BLT for review. The recommended decision would be revisited, and the concern would be given consideration.

If the Team Leaders view any proposed changes as being significant to the extent that the recommended decision needs revision, the revised recommendation would go back to the constituency groups for approval.

In order to ensure that the decisions are made in a timely way, once a BLT recommended decision has gone through the review process, individuals or an individual who continue(s) to maintain the same concern can call for the question. A two-thirds super majority vote of all staff, as outlined in our decision-making process, would be necessary for the decision to be approved.”

**This Statement of Concern is initiated by:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**This is submitted to the At-Large-Advocate: (name)** \_\_\_\_\_  
**on (date)** \_\_\_\_\_.

**This Statement of Concern is regarding the following decision made by the BLT:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I am filing a Statement of Concern to voice my opposition to the decision based on the following rationale:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_