

NORMS THAT ENHANCE DECISION-MAKING

The core membership of a SIT includes teachers, administrators, parents, other school staff, students, and community members. They are expected to:

- *be knowledgeable of the district's long-range strategic plan;*
- *participate in the development and implementation of the site plan and assure its consistency with the district's long-range strategic plan, through a process of consistent and collaborative decision making;*
- *focus decisions and discussions for the development of the school on ways to support student learning;*
- *stay informed and support improvement in student assessment, funding for staff development, and educating parents and community;*
- *develop and model an effective group process that can be emulated by students and staff;*
- *make budget decisions in accordance with the district's long-range strategic plan and strategic priorities;*
- *provide information regarding available community services and parenting skills;*
- *and, solicit input from the groups they represent.*

The chart shown above highlights the representative nature of a school improvement team. Some ways of working with those groups are more effective than others. The following Norms should be kept in mind when conducting any SIT meeting.

- ❖ Of special importance to *parents*: the use of a decision-making method that Acknowledges the weight of the problem, Affirms their rights to inquiry, and Allows for their participation in the creation of the solution.
- ❖ Of special importance to *students*: the use of a decision-making method that highlights the challenge (How can I impact the situation?—Participating in student government and the SIT allows me to make my school a better place.), and draws out an Affirmation (My ideas are important.—Give me equal time to express them.).
- ❖ Of special importance to *teachers and other staff members*: the use of a decision-making method that acknowledges their expertise and experience, acquaints them with the process—(What new learning will I need to complete the task?), and allows them to apply their skills to the task (How does this help me do my job more effectively?).
- ❖ Of special importance to *community members*: the use of a decision-making method that acknowledges their right to membership (I live in this community and care about its future development), and allows them to apply their skills to the task. (I have expertise that I am willing to share.)

The following template is especially useful at meetings in which controversial decisions will be discussed.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS ARE MY NEEDS BEING MET BY OUR DECISIONS?

SIT Member _____

Date _____

Proposed School Improvement Plan Decision

The proposed decision fulfills my need for:

Affirmation

- Affirms my rights to inquiry.**
- Affirms that my ideas are important and gives me time to express them.**

Acknowledgement

- Acknowledges the weight of the problem.**
- Acknowledges my expertise and experience.**
- Acknowledges my right to membership in the group.**

Allowance

- Allows for my participation in the creation of the solution.**
- Allows me to apply my skills to the task.**

Acquaintance

- Acquaints me with the process.**

Challenge

- Highlights how I can impact the situation.**

Briefly state why your needs are not met by the proposed decision.

Are you a: **Parent** **Student** **Staff Member**
 Community Member **Administrator**

V. Belay/2004

DECISION-MAKING OPTIONS

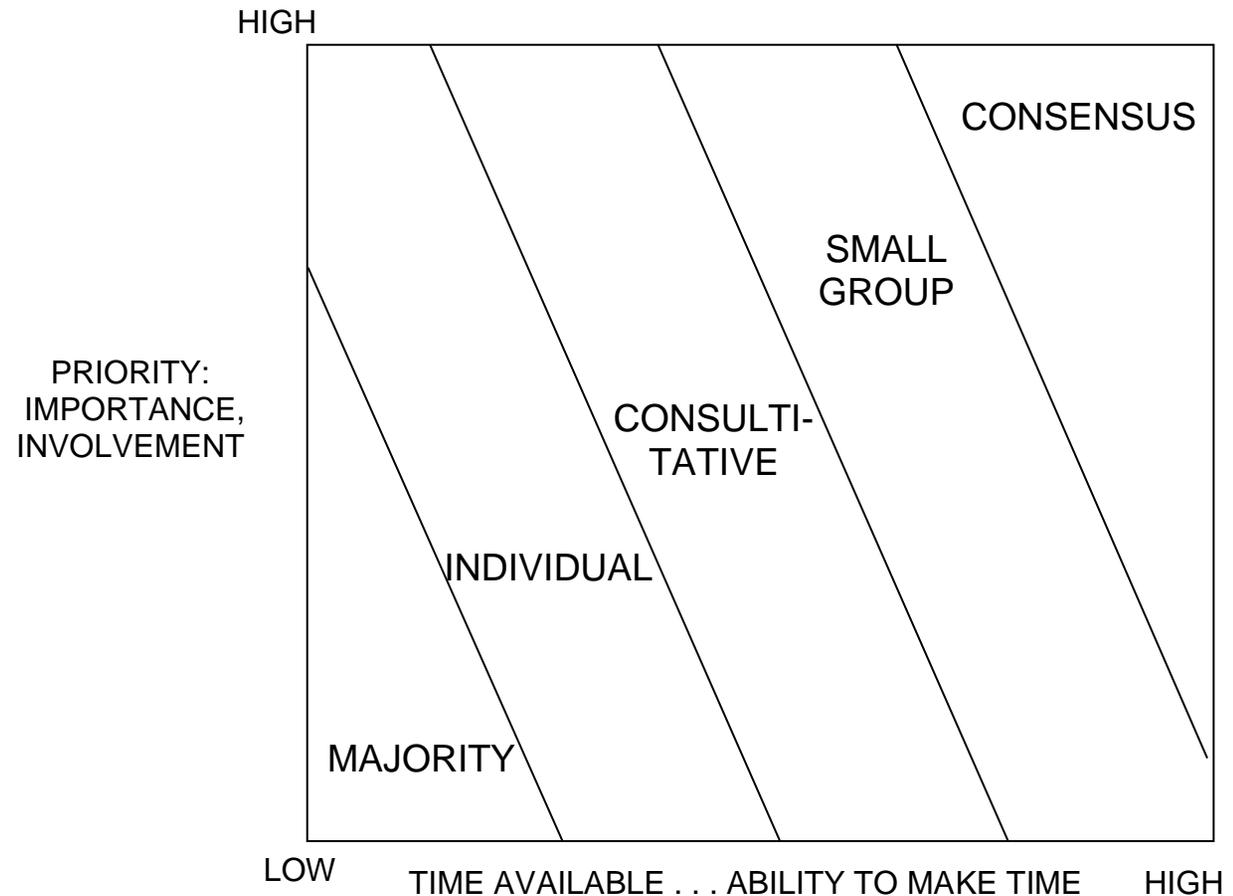
DECISION TYPE	ADVANTAGES	DRAWBACKS	APPROPRIATE WHEN	LOOKS LIKE
<p>Majority Decisions Team members discuss, listen and modify an issue until a majority (51%) agrees on a course of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ closes discussion ➤ individuals can voice opinions ➤ people can “live with” decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ can split team into coalitions ➤ minority views can be disregarded ➤ people may argue rather than explore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ideas/options are of equal value ➤ issue is non-controversial ➤ involvement by <i>all</i> is not essential 	
<p>Individual Decisions Leader or individual (expert) makes the decision and everyone is expected to accept it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ short time to execute ➤ works best when clear expert exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ must spell out implementation ➤ can be difficult to gain support ➤ can be wrong person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ issues are simple ➤ little gained by discussion ➤ involves clear area of expertise ➤ non-controversial 	
<p>Consultative Decision Leader or individual asks for information & ideas, considers objectives and makes the decision; others are expected to accept it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ gathers additional info ➤ people can offer suggestions ➤ efficient, saves time compared to small group or consensus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ may underestimate other’s ideas ➤ tendency to “play politics” ➤ may use only some resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ time an important factor ➤ decisions must be implemented quickly ➤ need for active involvement is minimal ➤ direction needs checking 	
<p>Small Group Decision A small “task group” works together to resolve a specific issue. Its decision is generally binding for the whole team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ manages a number of issues ➤ good use of time/resources ➤ acknowledges interest of key players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ invites “turf” protection ➤ small group may “railroad” decision past the full team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ addressing specific issues ➤ implementers are part of the group ➤ group can represent total team’s interests 	
<p>Consensus Decision Team members place all available info on the table, discuss merits of each idea and arrive at a decision that each person agrees with at least 75% and can support 100%.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ uses all team resources ➤ produces most creative decision ➤ commitment to implementation high ➤ “synergistic” high-quality decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ more time “up front” ➤ may not have group dynamics skills ➤ may be unwilling to develop interpersonal skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ determining big picture directions ➤ decision will directly impact team actions ➤ new ideas required ➤ complex decisions ➤ requires many implementers 	

Adapted from Communication Workshops, 1992

DECISION-MAKING MODEL

How to Use:

- 1) Assess your situation's *priority*. Place an X along left axis between High and Low.
- 2) Determine *time* available. Place another X along the bottom axis between High and Low.
- 3) Intersect the points by extending the X-marks perpendicularly out into the center of the model and marking where they cross.
- 4) Discuss how appropriate that particular decision style seems to your situation.



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A SAMPLE AGENDA

Agenda: ___ The Best School
When: ___ The best date, the best time
Where: ___ Best School conference room
Convener: ___ Sandy
Recorder: ___ Terry
Gatekeeper: Chris
Goals: ___ Review input from students, parents, community, teachers
 ___ Brainstorm possible solutions to student safety
 ___ Agree on next steps

<u>Item</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Person</u>	<u>Time</u>
1. -Share Survey results: Students, parent, community and staff		Sam	10 min.
2. Compile the results	Groups of five brainstorm and list problems identified and solutions identified	Sandy	30 min.
3. Group review	Groups report out on their findings, recorder synthesizes the results on one poster	Sandy & Terry	15 min.
4. Prioritization of safety issues	Each participant is given 3 dots to stick by the problem areas they see as the priority	Sandy	15 min.
5. Agenda for next meeting - Brainstorm Solutions -	Based on the top three problems identified, we will brainstorm possible solutions. Come to our next meeting armed with solutions and resources that will be needed to implement these solutions.	Sandy	5 min.
6. Debrief:	Group survey: How do you feel about the efficacy of our group's work so far this year?	Terry	10 min.

Next meeting: two weeks from today, 4:00- 6:00

Task Volunteers: Convener _____ Recorder _____
 _____ Gatekeeper _____

MEETING ROLES

Note: *Every meeting and group will not have all of these every time.*

Convener

- Calls the meeting (such as when a principal calls a meeting of the faculty)
 - Ensures that the room is arranged and equipment is available
 - Ensures that the agenda is developed and distributed
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Facilitator (often, but not always, the convener)

- Remains neutral (does not express an opinion)
 - Focuses group energy
 - Keeps the group on task
 - Directs processes
 - Encourages participation
 - Elicits clarity
 - If the facilitator wishes to become an advocate, he/she should change hats with somebody else.
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Recorder

- Records data, information, and decisions
 - Provides framework of reference for work
 - Publishes written minutes of the meeting
 - Uses chart paper or white board to capture ideas
 - Assists latecomers
 - Validates input and increases clarity by asking brief clarifying questions
 - Provides a focus point for the participants
 - Remains neutral
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Gatekeeper

- Keeps track of time on each item and reminds group when time has expired
- If no *coach* is designated (see next page) serves as "process coach" to the facilitator and group, suggesting processes that may serve to move the item along, such as brainstorming, focusing four, a survey, etc.

Person with role authority (such as a principal)

- Develops group member leadership
- Coordinates the activities of subcommittees
- Ensures that meeting follow-through occurs

A note about the principal or other administrator: Often in schools an administrator will attend a meeting, not as a team member but because of his/her responsibility and interest in the group's success and interest in the topic and outcome. The administrator should make his/her role clear. Expert? Resource person? Participant? Observer? Convener? Proposer? It can be any of these, but the group members need to know.

Person with knowledge authority, and often the proposer of a solution (such as the department chairman who is advocating a new course to a curriculum council, or the Technology Coordinator for advice about whether a new idea is feasible).

- Provides expert information
- Advocates for his/her ideas
- Informs group about constraints and resources
- Actively participates

Coach

- Invites discussion about the processes used in the meeting
- Asks participants to reflect privately about their own contributions to the meeting

Participant

- Monitors own and others' adherence to group agreements
 - Seeks and provides data
 - Opens the door for others to express themselves
 - Listens
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