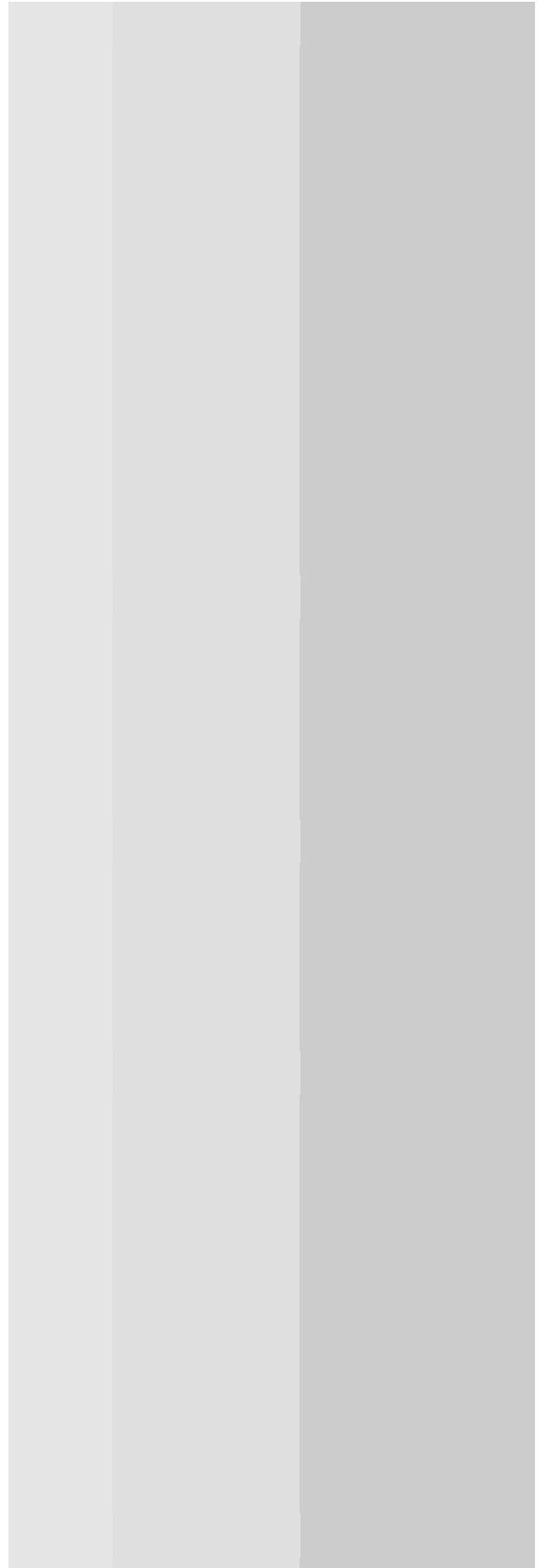# Leading School Improvement: Strategies for Site Council Success

A Workshop For Portland Site Councils

2002

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LEADING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
STRATEGIES FOR SITE COUNCIL
SUCCESS

OVERVIEW

The primary goal of a school site council is to make informed decisions that benefit students and their education. This training session is designed to provide tools and techniques to help a site council work effectively together as a team. Site councils are teams, who when working well, move a school forward producing results that are important and are owned by all the members of the school community. The skills learned in this workshop enable you as site council leaders and members to build and maintain a council that is effective. The session will cover the core building blocks for a successful council. A model for school improvement planning will be presented and participants will have an opportunity to analyze and apply what is learned to their council activities.

OUTCOMES

As a result of this workshop participants and individual site councils will be able to:

- Understand the stages of team development.
- Identify the key building blocks of an effective site council and determine the developmental needs of the council including site council purpose, working agreements, roles, decision making, and work planning, and communication.
- Identify the stages of school improvement planning and analyze the current status of planning in the school.
- Plan the next steps in school improvement planning

AGENDA
1. Welcome and Overview of Agenda and Outcomes
2. Process and Content in Teams
3. Stages of Team Development
4. The Building Blocks for an Effective Site Council
5. Individual Council Analysis and Planning
6. Essentials of Productive Site Council Meetings
7. The School Improvement Planning Process
8. Individual Council Analysis and work plan
9. Involving Stakeholders in the Planning Process

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ρ   **Schools as Communities**

ρ   **Working to Raise Achievement**

ρ   **The District Strategic Plan**

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why site councils? What are the main functions of a site council?

2. What don't site councils do?

3. What questions do you have about site councils?

Role of Site Council

Chief Responsibilities

1. Provide leadership to monitor and evaluate the school improvement plan to make sure that the goal(s) of the school improvement plan are being met. "Are we doing what we said we would do?" "Is this achieving the results we want?"

2. Provide leadership to coordinate the efforts of staff/school community to fulfill the plan.

3. Keep the focus on "What's best for students and their learning?"

4. Support staff development activities

Find and Use Resources:

1. Draw on the expertise of curriculum/teaching-learning experts (teachers, curriculum coordinators, consultants, students, parents, and research).

2. Keep informed about teaching-learning best practice, curriculum development, child development, brain research, etc.

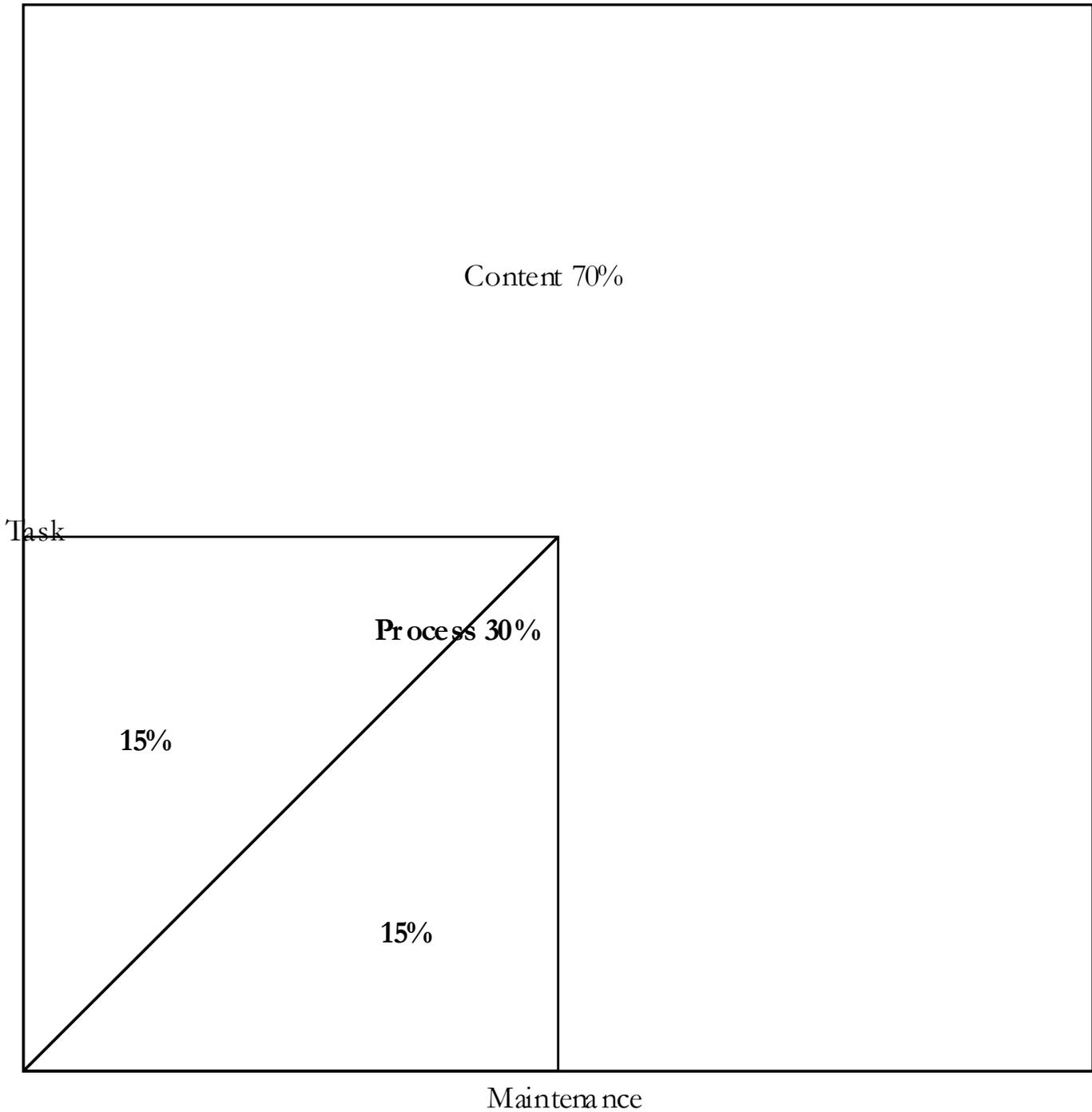3. Seek grants to financially support your goals when possible.

The Site Council is Not Responsible for:

1. Developing curriculum

2. Dictating instructional practices

3. Evaluating individual teacher performance

The Site Council is responsible for:

1. Informing themselves about critical issues, investigate the literature, seek exemplars of best practice, and bring appropriate information to the attention of staff.

2. Initiating conversation around student learning issues— "What would we be doing/or not doing if everything we did was decided by what's best for students?"

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Balancing Content and Process
The 70/15/15 Rule

Content 70%

Task

Process 30%

15%

15%

Maintenance

TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Team Development	Characteristics	Team Needs

1. Forming	• Forming/inclusion: initial stage orientation and exploration
	• Characterized by:
	  - getting to know each other
	  - setting goals
	  - defining roles
	  - dependency on leader
		Main Tasks: Inclusion and Orientation
		• Clear mission: Why are we here? What are we supposed to do?
		• Operating principles: How will we work together?
		• Shared vision
		• Will I fit in?

2. Storming	• Storming/Struggle for Control/Conflict and Flight - The Transitional Stage
	• Characterized by:
	  - clarification of roles and responsibilities
	  - leadership issues
		Main Tasks: Organization
		• Review operating principles
		• Clarify mission and roles
		• Resolve conflicts
		• Skill development

3. Norming	• Norming: The Working Stage - Affection - Cohesion and Productivity
	• Characterized by:
	  - calmness
	  - holding back
	  - rush to decisions
	  - leader becomes facilitator
		Main Tasks: Flow Information
		• Challenge ideas
		• Promote creativity

4. Performing	• Consolidation
	• Characterized by:
	  - operating at peak performance
	  - pride of accomplishments
	  - deal with issues directly
	  - Highly task oriented
		Main Tasks: Problem Solving
		• Celebrate success
		• Look for new challenges/ opportunities
		• Opportunities to work in sub-groups, singly, or as a unit

WHAT PHASE IS YOUR SITE COUNCIL IN?

Analysis and action planning

1. What phase of development is your site council in?

2. Why do you think so?

3. What building blocks might be appropriate for your council at this time?

BUILDING BLOCKS OF
A SUCCESSFUL SITE COUNCIL

1. Develop Site Council Purpose/Mission
   When we are successful:
- All members will have a thorough understanding of state law and district policies related to site councils.

  A site council works best when everyone understands its purpose and goals.
  The council's mission or purpose statement is a statement of the reason it exists. Whether you call it a mission or purpose, it represents the fundamental reason for the group's existence. What are we here to do together? A council that understands its mission can determine its goals more easily to set boundaries and to know what is and isn't within their jurisdiction. The mission statement is developed by team members, and all members must understand and support it. The site council mission is distinct from a school mission.

  The focus of the site council should be on the following:
  - Improvement of the school's instructional program
  - Development and coordination of the implementation of school reform
  - Development and implementation of a plan to improve the professional growth of the school staff
  - Manage the on-going maintenance of the site council

2. Build Council Membership
   When we are successful:
- Site council membership complies with Oregon Administrative Rules.
- Parents and community members on the council are representative of the diversity of the larger school community.

  A site council is composed of representatives from the diversity of the school community including teachers, staff, parents, administration, and at times, students and community members.

3. Establish Operating Agreements
   When we are successful:
- Meetings are organized, have clear agendas and accomplish pre-established objectives in a timely manner.
- Members come prepared.
- Members have agreed on acceptable behavior and follow the agreements.
- The environment is welcoming.
- When members disagree, they try to see each others' point of view.
- Members feel free to question and disagree with each other.
- All members are treated as equals.

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The site council should discuss and set group norms early on in its existence.
Team agreements are the basic rules that a council establishes for working together. The rules or operating agreements cover procedural issues such as meeting schedules, minutes, and decision making as well as interpersonal communication issues.

4. Define Roles and responsibilities
When we are successful:
- Site council roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and members understand them.

Teams operate more efficiently if group members know who is responsible for what issues and tasks. Most site councils identify a chair or co-chairs and a recorder or minutes taker. Other roles may include summarizer, process observer, and facilitator. In some cases the chair acts as the facilitator. In other cases the roles are separated and held by two individuals.

5. Establish Decision Making Procedures
If we are successful:
- All viewpoints will be considered in making decisions.
- We agreed ahead of time how we will make decisions.
- Everybody's clear on when we have made a decision and what the decision is.

A site council should always be aware of the different ways it reaches decisions.
Will the council use consensus decision making? How will they define consensus?

6. Develop An Annual Action Plan
When we are successful:
- We have an annual action plan which includes specific council goals, tasks, resources, timelines and measures accountability.

An annual plan includes the specific measurable steps or the activities to which the council commits itself. Site councils generally facilitate the completion of the school profile and the school improvement plan, establish overall school goals and determine staff development priorities for supporting the accomplishment of the goals.

7. Develop a Communication Plan
When we are successful:
- The site council gets input from its partners on priorities for the school.
- There is active two-way communication between the site council and its partners.

A council is only effective if it has buy-in from its key partners — staff, parents, students, and administration. Communication from and to partners is the key to obtaining buy-in. A specific plan should be established for communication with the key partners.

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DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT

What is a Mission Statement?

A site council works best when everyone understands its purpose and goals.

The council's mission or purpose statement is a statement of the reason it exists. Whether you call it a mission or purpose, it represents the fundamental reason for the group's existence. What are we here to do together? The site council mission is different from a school mission.

The legislature set out the core functions of a site council as follows:
- Improvement of the school's instructional program
- Development and coordination of the implementation of school reform
- Development and implementation of a plan to improve the professional growth of the school staff
- Manage the on-going maintenance of the site council

Why is it important?

Many people joining a site council have a different understanding of the council's purpose. Reaching a common understanding of the council's purpose gives a council a firm foundation.

Reaching consensus on a council mission assists in several ways:
- Assists all council members to understand what the council is supposed to do.
- Assists the council to define success.
- Assists the council to understand the parameters it is working within.
- Knowing what your council is supposed to do helps you understand what it is <u>not</u> suppose to do.
- It is critical for council members to understand the district expectations for councils as well as any contract, district, or site parameters under which the council operates.

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When do you need it?

The first step in making an effective council out of a diverse group of individuals is to develop a common understanding of the council's purpose.

How do you develop it?

To complete a mission statement ask the council members to complete the following sentences. Write their ideas on a flip chart.
- We exist to (achieve what results)…
- By using (what techniques/steps)…
- Within (what boundaries/constraints)…

Together, identify the most important concepts and craft a statement.

To test your mission, ask the following:
- Is it short and simple?
- Will our stakeholders buy-in?
- Will it inspire team to strive for results?
- Does it describe the fundamental purpose over which the council has control?

SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT

THE HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

 The mission of the Harrison High School Site Council is to provide leadership, direction and support to the school community to achieve school improvement. The scope of work of the council is on the following areas:

1. The improvement of the school's instructional program, including policies to secure and maximize the learning environment.

2. The development of plans to enhance the professional development of the staff, including the administration of funds for instructional training through workshops, etc.

3. The development and coordination of programs which support the implementation of Oregon's Educational Act for the 21st Century.

4. The development of an annual School Improvement Plan, based on goals consistent with the high school's and district's mission statements; the implementation and evaluation of activities related to these goals; presentation of the S.I.P. to the school board.

OUR MISSION

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BUILD COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

When we are successful:
- Site council membership complies with Oregon Administrative Rules.
- Parents and community members on the council are representative of the diversity of the larger school community.

What is Council membership?

The law states that site council **must** be composed of:
- Teachers in the school
- Parents or legal guardians of students attending that school;
- Classified employees in the school
- The principal of the building or the principal's designee.

In addition, other members may be designated, including but not limited to local school committee members, business leaders, students and members of the community at large.

Members of a 21st Century schools council shall be selected as follows:
    a. Teachers shall be licensed teachers elected by licensed teachers at the school site;
    b. Classified employees shall be elected by classified employees at the school site;
    c. Parents shall be elected by parents of students attending the school; and
    d. Other representatives shall be selected by the council.

In forming your council membership remember, the law states that:
- No more than half the members of the council shall be teachers and no more than half shall be parents.

Why is it important?

It is important to have a fully formed council which is representative of the school community. Wise and diverse perspectives will assist the council in completing its work and building trust throughout the entire school community.

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When do you need it?

Determine your council composition, terms of office, and recruitment and selection/election when you form your council and the by-laws are developed or annually as you review your by-laws.

How do you develop it?

It is the responsibility of the council to ensure the selection/election process is broad-based, democratic and representative of the school community. The first step in building your site council membership is to set your composition. Determine how large a council you would like and the number of representatives from each mandated category. Consider adding two students at the secondary level. Establish the term of office. The term of office for all members, excluding the principal. Most site councils set a two or three year term of office with a rotation of members. For new or reforming councils, set the terms at one, two or three years to assure a rotation. Terms are typically July through June of the following year, with elections held no later than May of each year.

Next clarify and clearly state how and when members will be recruited and selected.

A position left vacant for any reason shall be filled by election of the stakeholder group. Elections should take place no later than 30 days after the vacancy occurs. Those elected to fill a vacancy generally complete the term they are filling. They may then stand for election for a full term.

It is not uncommon for site councils to experience attendance problems. It is recommended that the chair or their designee (perhaps the members from the same stakeholder group) contact any member who is absent for more than three consecutive meetings or more than four meetings in a school year to discuss the member's continuing interest in the council.

The Blue River Middle School Site Council membership:

- **Five teachers**
- **Four parents**
- **Principal**

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- **One classified staff member**

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OUR SITE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP PLAN

Our members:

Terms:

Recruitment/election/selection

Vacancies:

Other:

ESTABLISH COUNCIL OPERATING AGREEMENTS

What are council operating agreements?

Council operating agreements are the basic rules members adopt about how they will conduct themselves. They may include procedural elements (e.g., start on time, etc.) as well as interpersonal (e.g. speak for yourself, let people finish, etc.). In addition, the team should also clarify basic operating processes such as rotation of members, length of terms, meeting logistics, orientation, methods members are selected for the council, and any specific district parameters or expectations for councils. Many councils summarize this information in council by-laws.

Why are they important?

A primary concern of all team members should be to establish an atmosphere where all are free to express their opinions. In order to do this, it is critical for council to reach consensus on its operating agreements. This helps develop norms that support the needs of the team members and the needs of the school. If a council agrees on its operating principles at the outset, you can avoid a lot of problems as teams deal with difficult decisions. Operating agreements are best expressed as positive statements.

For example:
• "Let people finish" instead of "Don't interrupt."

When do you need them?

Establishing the team agreements is one of the first things a council should do. Periodic re-evaluation is useful for a council when new members join, at the beginning of the school year, at mid-year or end-of-year for a self-assessment or when group process appears to be breaking down. Team operating agreements are a living document, and can be added to and revised.

How do you develop them?

Use the attached worksheet to generate possible operating agreements.

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AGREEMENTS WORKSHEET

Attendance
Promptness
Meeting Place and Time
Participation
Listening/Speaking
Assignments
Decision-making
Minutes
Rotation of Routine Chores
Agenda Building

Other

SITE COUNCIL AGREEMENTS

THE BIG VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL MEMBERS AGREE TO:

- **commit to consistent and timely attendance.**
- **to be honest, supportive, trustworthy, respectful and to value each other's opinions and positions.**
- **focus on the situation, issue, behavior, not the person.**
- **not to make decisions by default.**
- **set an agenda, clearly state the desired meeting outcomes, and gatekeep time.**
- **monitor their air time.**
- **begin and end the meetings on time.**
- **evaluate regularly. Check meeting process and operating agreements periodically.**
- **keep updated and accurate team minutes and records.**
- **to have each member responsible for informing another team member if he or she cannot attend a meeting and sending along with them any assigned homework tasks/information that the team needs to function as planned.**

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THE HARRISON SITE COUNCIL MEMBERS AGREE TO....

ESTABLISH COUNCIL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

What are council roles and responsibilities?

For any council to function well, its members need to know what is expected of them. This helps avoid problems such as no one doing key tasks, one person trying to do too much, or conflict over who does what. While there is no recipe of required roles for a council, certain roles have proved to be critical for effective council operation. These include the following:

Roles   **Functions**

Facilitator
The facilitator presides over the meeting and is primarily responsible for keeping the meeting focused and moving.

- Keep the discussion focused on the agenda.
- Assist the council in evaluating its progress.
- Summarize key points.
- Provide feedback to the council.
- Assists the council in following its decision making procedures.

Chair
The chair may or may not be filled by the same person as the facilitator.

- Pre-meeting preparation including agendas and supporting materials.
- Provides direction.
- Represents the council and is the point or contact person for the council.
- Coordinates with facilitator (if the roles are not combined).
- Assesses progress.
- Keeps a master copy of council records.

Recorder/Scribe
The recorder records the council's ideas, decision, and assignments.

- Listens carefully and accurately captures for the council members what has been said, agreed to, or decided.
- Maintains the council's memory in official minutes.

Council Member
Council members need to understand up front what is expected of them, during and between meetings.

- Reporting to stakeholders groups.
- Attend and participate in meetings.
- Offer experience, knowledge, and ideas.
- Secondary facilitation to keep meetings on track.

Other Roles
Other roles may include a time keeper or process observer.

Why are they important?

> For team members to work together productively without duplication of effort, confusion, and unclear expectations, they need to understand the variety of roles, both formal and informal for a successful team.

When do you need them?

> Establishing team roles is one of the first things a council should do. Periodic re-evaluation is useful for a council when new members join, at the beginning of the school year, at mid-year or end-of-year for a self-assessment or when group process appears to be breaking down.

How do you develop them?

> Ask the council members to identify the critical functions to be covered. Examine the roles described above. Determine together which roles the members believe are most appropriate to facilitate the functioning of the council.

OUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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ESTABLISH DECISION MAKING PROCEDURES

What are decision making procedures?

Decision making is one of the most important activities of a site council. Clarifying both which decisions belong to a council and the process to arrive at these decisions is an important first activity of a council. Many site councils use consensus decision making. Others use consensus and have a fall back voting decision making method if the council is unable to reach consensus.

Ideally, the team should:
- Discuss how decisions will be made, such as when to take a poll, when to decide by consensus (are there times when a decision by only a few people is acceptable?).
- Explore more important issues by polling (each member is asked to vote or state an opinion verbally or in writing).
- Decide important issues by consensus.
- Test for consensus ("This seems to be our agreement. Is there anyone who feels unsure about this choice?")
- Use data as the basis of decisions.

REACHING CONSENSUS

Consensus is:
- a general agreement among several people. It occurs when all group members can support the decision.

Consensus is not:
- a unanimous vote—a consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities.
- a majority vote—in a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority may get something they don't want at all, which is not what consensus is all about.
- everyone totally satisfied.

Why is it important?

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Defining the decisions a council will make as well as the process for making them will focus council meetings and prevent unnecessary conflict.

When do you need them?

Establishing the decision making procedures is one of the first things a council should do. Periodic re-evaluation is useful for a council when new members join, at the beginning of the school year, at mid-year or end-of-year for a self-assessment or when group process appears to be breaking down.

Remember, it is very important to determine a decision making process prior to making actual decisions.

How do you develop them?

To determine if all group members have reached the mutual acceptance of a decision, the leader or facilitator (or any team member) should ask:

- **Does everyone accept the decision?**
  A "yes" answer means that decision has been made.
- **Is there any opposition to this decision?**
  If no one speaks, the answer may be that everyone agrees with the decision; the questioner should also be alert for non-verbal signs which could indicate opposition.
- **Can everyone live with the decision?**
  A "yes" ensures that people can support the decision.

The challenge of consensus is leading the discussion so that each group member can make the following statements:

1. **I've heard your position.**
2. **I believe you've heard my position.**
3. **I've asked for help or accommodation.**
4. **I can support the proposed decision.**

HOW DO WE DECIDE?

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DEVELOP AN ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

What is an annual Action plan?

The annual action plan is the specific measurable goals/steps or the activities to which the council commits itself.

Site councils generally facilitate:
- the completion of the school profile.
- communication with the members of the school community.
- completion of the school improvement plan.
- establishment of overall school goals.
- evaluation and monitoring the school improvement plan.
- determining staff development priorities for supporting the accomplishment of the school improvement plan.

Remember to include:
- Evaluation of the site council's overall functioning.
- Orientation of new members and preparation to recruit and elect new members.

Why is it important?

When the council has established its mission, it is ready to translate that mission into a specific action plan.

A plan:
- helps a council coordinate the efforts of all members.
- identifies targets and deadlines.
- makes sure that all key stakeholders are involved.
- helps identify needed resources.

When do you need it?

Develop an annual action plan soon after forming a new council — after the council has developed its mission and as the council accomplishes the plan. An action plan will most likely be set

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annually, at the end of the school year or the beginning of the next school year.

How do you develop it?

Knowing how to create a action plan is a valuable skill. Here is an approach to creating a site council work plan:
- Identify what you want to accomplish.
- Identify the major steps for each of these activities.
- Estimate how much time and what resources are needed to accomplish the tasks.
  — How much time is needed?
  — Who needs to be involved?
  — What supplies or resources are needed?
- Identify measures of progress.
  — How will you know if the plan is working?
- Create a document that shows the basic elements of the plan.

Work plans should include specific goals. Goals should be described as fully and specifically as possible and should include target dates.

These are the characteristics of a well-stated goal:
- It is specific and measurable.
- It includes a completion date or time frame.
- It is written down and communicated to others.
- It is challenging, but attainable.

- **ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPLISH BY NOVEMBER?**

- **BY FEBRUARY?**

- **BY JUNE?**

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DEVELOP A COMMUNICATION PLAN

What is a Communication Plan?

A communication plan identifies the actions a site council will take to communicate with the members of the school community.

Why is it important?

Frequent and two-way communication with the members of the school community is essential for site council success. Without the involvement, input and advise from the school community the council cannot effectively operate.

When do you need it?

A communication plan should be developed as part of the annual action plan and reviewed periodically throughout the year.

How do you develop it?

To develop a communication plan, first identifying the key partners of your council, those who have a stake in the council's work. This must include parents, staff, the district, and may also include the wider community and students. Ask your key partners what they expect and need from the council in terms of communication. Each communication plan must include details of how and when minutes will be made available. Explore and utilize a variety of communication strategies. Make sure that you utilize more than written, one-way communication, i.e. council minutes.

Involvement strategies include:
- Forums to discuss key issues
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Sending representatives of the council to a meeting of another group
- Newsletters
- Web site

- Interviews
- Presentations to the council

MEETING ESSENTIALS

PRE-WORK – PLANNING THE MEETING

A key factor in meeting success is the quality of the preparation and per-work.

- Consult with the group members to determine items needing attention and action at the meeting.

- Define the major <u>outcomes</u> - what a meeting aims to achieve; the expected results.

  Whatever the major outcomes are, keep them in mind and focus major energy on them. Clearly state your meeting outcomes. Examples of outcomes are: plan, develop, decide, determine generate, identify, recommend, list, prioritize, solve, resolve, review, confirm, define, report, establish, revise, complete, select.

  In many cases the next meeting's outcomes and tentative agenda can be developed at the close of each meeting.

- Prepare an agenda. Carefully determine the flow of the agenda to ensure that primary energy and time are given to accomplish the objectives.

- Assign responsibilities. Persons responsible for reports, leading a particular part of the meeting, etc. should be clearly communicated with regarding their position in the agenda and time constraints.

- Send out reports, background materials, agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and any other materials which will help prepare the members so that they can get right to work at the meeting itself.

- Plan the logistics; refreshments, room arrangement, materials and supplies needed

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DURING THE MEETING

- Have a convenor/facilitator to assist the group to accomplish its goals.

- Stay on target. This is a responsibility not only for the formal leader, but for each member as well. While deviations from the agenda are acceptable and often valuable, people shouldn't be allowed to direct energy away from the major designated tasks of the meeting.

- Use the issue bin/parking lot. The issue bin is a listing of issues that are brought up by participants which are not directly related to the topic being discussed. This enables a group to stay focused without discounting concerns.

- Often groups stray off target or endlessly discuss an agenda item because they're not aware of the options in receiving reports, proposals, and issues. The group can act in any of the following ways on items on the agenda:
  - Item received as information
  - Item received as information for future action, but not at this meeting.
  - Item referred to committee for study, recommendation, or action
  - Item received for discussion only.
  - Item received for discussion and action (approval or disapproval.)

- Budget agenda time. Discuss with those responsible for reports or other agenda items how much time they will need. Honor time constraints by starting and ending the meetings on time. Late comers should be caught up ONLY on the item under discussion so that they can participate. They should catch up on what preceded the current discussion after the meeting or during a break.

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CLOSE THE MEETING

- Summarize key points and assignments

- Review the issue bin

- Identify tentative agenda for the next meeting

- Plan for communication

- Evaluate the meeting: the flow, the quality of information provided for decision making, and if the agenda and use of time enabled the group to do what needed to be done.

  - What are the "pluses" of today's meeting? What went well? What would you change or do differently?
  - Pick a word to describe today's meeting.
  - Looking at our agenda and desired outcomes, how effective were we? What one thing could we do to make our meetings more effective?

EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION SKILLS

Effective discussion skills are necessary for effective meetings, which in term are necessary for effective teams. A team will be effective when all team members, not just the team leader or facilitator uses the effective discussion skills.

Team members should:

- **ASK FOR CLARIFICATION**

- **ACT AS GATEKEEPERS**

- **LISTEN**

- **SUMMARIZE**

- **CONTAIN DIGRESSION**

- **MANAGE TIME**

- **END THE DISCUSSION**

- **TEST FOR CONSENSUS**

- **CONSTANTLY EVALUATE THE MEETING PROCESS**
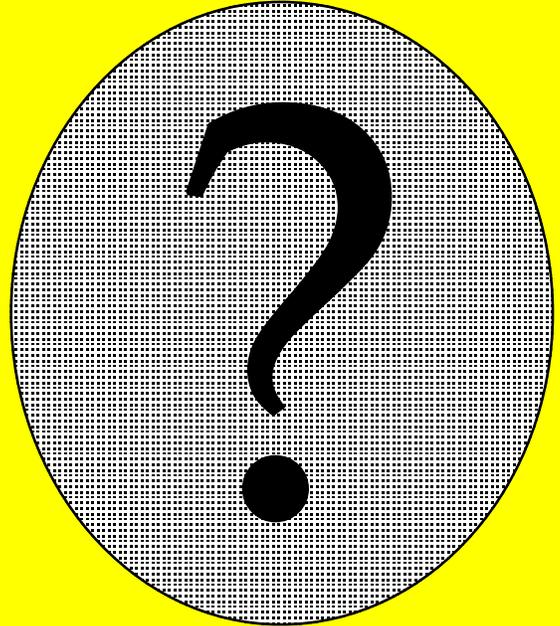
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- **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING**

KEY QUESTIONS

How are we doing?

How do you know?

How do we improve?

How can we share our successess with the people who have a stake in our school?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
PLANNING MODEL

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

When we are successful…
- **There is a specific action plan in place to accomplish the student achievement goals.**

- **The School Improvement Plan builds on assets and addresses the school's most pressing issues.**

- **We collect and analyze data throughout the year in order to track student achievement.**

- **We use a variety of data (tests, surveys, and other information) to track how our students are doing.**

- **The School Improvement Plan is aligned with the District Strategic Plan.**

- **The site council helps plan staff development activities which are aligned to the school improvement goals and meaningful and relevant to the instructional needs of teachers.**

- **The work of the site council has made an impact on student learning.**

- **Plans are regularly monitored, reviewed and revised to reflect changes in the school.**

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

θ FIRST **CELEBRATE ! ! ! !**

θ **VISION**

- What is our vision?

- How do we develop the vision with members of the school community?

- Does our vision provide impetus for change?

- What process was used and who was involved in developing the vision?

- Do members of the school community understand and support the vision?

OUR VISION CHECK UP

θ   WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THAT SCHOOL DATA?

Data Collection, Analysis, and Gap Analysis:
The School Profile

Collecting and analyzing data is the first phase in the development of the school improvement plan. It offers the opportunity for the plan to be based on data driven decisions rather than perceived or narrow needs. The first step is to:

1. Collect data
To collect data the site council may use various methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, and different data sources)

Your data has arrived
Your file is full with data about students: state results, school surveys, district test results, SES comparison scores, attendance, mobility…now what do you do?

2. Review and analyze the data
- Be sure you can correctly read the data.
- Make comparisons of what was, what is, and what you want to accomplish;
- Look for and determine trends over several years;
- Identify problems, strengths and challenges.
- If you see a problem, ask yourself four questions:
  - Is there a problem? List specific data
  - Why might the problem exist?
  - What are the consequences of the problem?
  - What actions need to be taken?
- Involve multiple groups to "digest" the data and share important information at various times over the year.

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3. Share the Data
   Who Needs to See the Data?
   - The site council should review data regularly.
   - Staff, which means everyone in the building, must see the data regularly. Ownership of school improvement and creating a school picture for everyone is a major purpose of sharing data.
   - Parents should see data related to school improvement planning. It helps them see the whole work of the school and find their part in accomplishing the goals.
   - Students may also benefit from analyzing data.

4. Analyze Gaps
   - Draw conclusions from the data analysis about the present realities;
   - Compare realities with the vision;
   - Define the gaps;
   - Identify priority needs;
   - Translate these priorities into multi-year school improvement goals.

DATA ANALYSIS - REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What information do we have?

- What information do we need?

- What is the information telling us?

- What are the gaps between where we are and where we want to be?

- What are the priorities based on the gap analysis?

OUR DATA ANALYSIS CHECK UP

GOOD DATA COLLECTION NEEDS TO DO THE FOLLOWING

- Be accurate and relevant

- Be efficient in its collection methodologies

- Be comparable - between schools, districts, counties, states and perhaps even countries

- Be meaningful and useful

- Show gains and losses over time

- Be understandable to the general public

- Be shared, remember when you collect data you must be willing to share it

- Measure real outcomes

- Be brief

- Inspire action

- Suggest strategies

- Active solicitation of traditionally under-represented groups

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θ Goals – The School Improvement Plan

Achievable, measurable, multi-year, school wide goals focused student achievement are the heart of the school improvement plan.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- Were the goals accomplished?

- Are the goals still appropriate?

- Should the goals be continued, revised or replaced?

- Do our goals address the schools' most pressing issues?

- Is our plan aligned with the District Strategic Plan?

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OUR GOALS CHECK UP

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θ   ACTION PLANS - The School Improvement Plan

The action plan:
- identifies what needs to be done to achieve the goals;
- coordinates resources;
- identifies who is responsible for each activity;
- identifies when the activity will be accomplished;
- involves representatives of the school community in its development;
- outlines needed professional development;
- addresses family and community;

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
- Does the plan help us do what we want?

- Is it clear and concise?

- Is it doable?

- Does it identify how we will know we are making progress?

OUR ACTION PLAN CHECK UP

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θ   EVALUATION – The School Improvement Plan

School improvement planning is an ongoing process. The site council needs to build in time and activities for assessing accomplishments, making adjustments on goals and activities as needed and communicating with the school community.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- How is our plan periodically reviewed?

- Has our work made an impact on student learning?

- How do we know we are achieving our goals and our vision?

- How are assessment data reviewed and how are results used for improving student achievement?

EVALUATION CHECK-UP

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ACTION PLANNING

1. Where are you now with your school improvement planning?

2. Where will you want to be by December, 2002?

3. Where will you want to be by June, 2003?

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APPENDIX

THE PROFILE

In developing the school improvement plan, it is helpful to thoroughly know and understand the school and community. Collecting and analyzing the data for a school profile can provide a site council and school staff with a clear view of the current state of the school and community.

A profile report may include a broad range of building level data that could include information from the following categories in addition to other data:

Student Performance
  Data that includes knowledge, skills and attitudes

  - student progress as measured on school, district, or state assessment
  - portfolios
  - grades
  - teacher observations
  - measures of student success in vocational, college and other post-secondary programs
  - school report card

School Characteristics
  Data on school climate, practices, and expectations

  - student participation and attitudes toward learning
  - attendance and drop-out rates
  - student conduct and disciplinary actions
  - staff attitudes and expectations toward instructional practices and innovations
  - classroom practices
  - parent involvement, attitudes, and expectations

School Resources
  Data on the use of time, support personnel, staff characteristics, staff assignments, school partnerships and instructional materials

  - class size
  - teacher assignments
  - student/teacher ratios
  - profile of personnel, including such characteristics as years of experience
  - rate of turnover and absenteeism

Contextual variables
  Data of school and community demographic/socioeconomic characteristics and expectations

  - cultural and ethnic diversity
  - community expectations and involvement in the school
  - socioeconomic status of the community
  - ability of a district to provide support and resources for the schools
  - community resources

  Adapted from *A Leader's Resources for Developing a School Improvement Plan*, Buisman & Bestiani, Portland Public Schools

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DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Method	Advantages	Limitations	Dos & Don'ts
Interview	High credibility Reveals feelings, causes and possible solutions Affords maximum opportunity for free expression of opinion, giving of suggestions Opportunity for clarification of questions/comments	Is time-consuming, so can reach relatively few people Results may be difficult to quantify Can make subject feel s/he is "on the spot" Expensive Interviewer inconsistency	Pretest and revise interview question as needed Be sure interviewer can and does listen, doesn't judge responses Do not use to interpret, sell, or educate
Survey	Can reach many people in short time Is relatively inexpensive Gives opportunity of expression without fear or embarrassment Yields data easily summarized and reported Consistent questions to all	Little provision for free expression of unanticipated responses May be difficult to construct Has limited effectiveness in getting at causes of problems and possible solutions. Often has poor response rate Inconsistent interpretations	Pretest and revise questions and form as needed Offer and safeguard anonymity Use only if prepared to— report findings, both favorable and unfavorable, do something about them Provide opportunity for participants to make additional comments When using numeral scales, ask for an explanation of responses. For example: Surveys. . .How would you rate the discipline in this school? Poor Average Excellent 1 2 3 4 5 What would it take to make your rating a "5"

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Method	Advantages	Limitations	Dos & Don'ts
Group Problem Analysis (Focus Groups)	Same as for interview **plus**: Permits synthesis of different viewpoints Builds support for needed training Is in itself good training	Is time-consuming and initially expensive Possibility of "group think" Results may be difficult to quantify Requires strong facilitation skills May turn into gripe session	Do not promise or expect quick results Start with problem *known* to be of concern to group Identify *all* problems of significant concern to group Let group make own analysis, set own priorities
Records & Reports Study	Provide excellent clues to trouble spots Provide best objective evidence of results of problems Are usually of concern to and easily understood by evaluators Easy to access Inexpensive	Do not show causes of problems, or possible solutions May not provide enough cases (e.g., grievances) to be meaningful May not reflect *current* situation, recent changes Information often incomplete, false, or misleading	Use as checks and clues, in combination with other methods
Observation	Dealing with real world behavior and situations Visibility of the impact of the environment on behavior	Can generate modified behavior (I know you are watching me) Requires familiarity with that which is being observed No control over situation; might have a long wait before able to observe target behavior Expensive in terms of time and resources required	Try to "melt into the background" If people know they are being observed, watch long enough for the impact to wear off

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Method	Advantages	Limitations	Dos & Don'ts
Performance Tests Essays Demonstrations Projects Performances	Provide actual sample of student work Can provide "diagnostic" information about student performance and about instruction Available for all subjects Credible method for assessing complex skills and processes	Criteria for judging needs to reflect subject matter standards yet be understandable and usable by all Need many samples Time consuming Finding scorers may be difficult given the time commitment to training and scoring Costly if you pay scorers or use release time	
Portfolios	Provide a broader range of students work than one sample Used for many purposes Provide students opportunities to observe own growth and reflect on own work Encourage integration of instruction and assessment	Must be defined Scoring methods must be developed Methods for interpreting need to be developed	

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