

NISKAYUNA SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING AND SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEE

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

As required by Section 100.11 of the Commissioner's Regulations, by February 1, 1994, the Board of Education developed and adopted a district plan for the participation by teachers and parents with administrators and school board members in school-based planning and shared decision making.

This district plan specified the educational issues subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making at the building site, the manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties, the means and standards to evaluate improvement in student achievement, the means for accountability for decision makers, a process for resolution of disputes about educational issues and the manner in which state and federal requirements for parent involvement will be coordinated and met by the plan.

A committee consisting of teachers, support staff, parents, students, administrators, community members and Board of Education was convened by the Superintendent of Schools. Each of the participants was selected by the respective constituent groups:

- Teachers were selected by NTA
- Parents were selected by PTO
- Support staff were selected by their associations
- High School students were selected by the Student Congress
- Administrators were selected by the Administrators' Association
- Community member and Board of Education member were selected by the BOE

With full participation and consultation, this committee recommended the original plan to the Superintendent for review and adoption by the Board of Education. It is understood by law this plan will be reviewed biennially by a district committee and approved by the Board of Education no later than February 1. This document reflects all modifications since the last revision of the document.

Note: For purposes of efficiency, building team means the building School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making Team and district committee is the District School Based Planning and Shared Decision Making Committee.

DISTRICT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making is a process designed to involve individuals responsible for implementing decisions in actually making those decisions. The focus of this process in Niskayuna is on education. Its purpose is to improve schools in a framework of trust and collaboration among staff, parents, students, and the community. The main goal is to improve student achievement through alignment of curriculum with the learning standards and state assessments and district-wide and building-level planning, and to make data-driven decisions that focus on the improvement of teaching and learning. A secondary goal is to strengthen community support for the schools by fostering greater public involvement in and "ownership" of the schools.

School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making is a partnership. Administrators, teachers and other staff members, students, parents, and community members are involved in significant decisions about their schools. The process provides for collaboration in decision making and for shared responsibility and authority for school improvement at the school level. At the same time, the sharing of authority and responsibility in this plan shall not diminish the ability of the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools, or Building Principal to fulfill their legal responsibilities for the supervision and management of the school district or building.

Any building team may petition the district committee for a variance to any portion of this document.

BUILDING TEAM STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

The building team shall consist of teachers*, administrators, parents, support staff, middle school and high school students, and, when available, members of the community at large. Following is the building team's specific structure at the elementary, middle school and high school level. By consensus, a building team may petition to change this structure, however the resultant structure must contain designated representatives of the administrators, teachers, and parents.

Group	Elem #	MS #	HS #	Selected by
Teachers	3-5	3-5	3-8	Building teachers
Parents	1-2	1-2	2-4	Building PTO
Administrators	1	1	2	Building Administrator
Student(s)	0	2 (gr. 7 & 8)	3-4	Student Congress
Support Staff	1-2	1-2	2-3	Building support group
Community	1-2	1-2	1-2	Building team

*For purposes of this plan, teachers include all groups represented by the NTA.

**Consultant means that a director may be called upon to assist a building team in an "ad hoc" fashion but is not a participating member in consensus decision making.

Organizing Process

	Size of group	Term
Elem	7-12	2 years for teachers, support staff and parents; 1 year for community and students (2 year groups will stagger their participants' terms). Elected representatives can serve not more than two consecutive terms but may come back on the team after a one year hiatus.
MS	10-15	
HS	14-24	

Any building organizing team must include representatives from all groups (excepting community) that will have membership on the building team. Organizing teams must realize that formal teams will be expected to meet all guidelines of the district plan. Constituent groups will, within the guidelines, determine their membership numbers. Teams should be organized by October 1 of each school year.

In the event a building team is unable, after a good faith effort, to meet the minimum membership requirements for one or more groups, the team shall report their membership to the committee and may operate for 1 year with less than the minimum membership.

Selection Process

- Teachers - In each building, interested teachers shall have their names placed on a ballot to be voted on by the building faculty in an election conducted by the NTA.
- Administrators - In each building where there is more than one administrator, the building principal shall be one of the team members and shall select the additional administrative member. Directors will be selected through the NDA President.
- Support staff - In each building, interested support staff members shall have their names placed on a ballot to be voted on by the building support staff.
- Parents - Each building PTO shall form a process for selection of parent representatives to its building team which shall include the following:
 - A well-publicized, open application procedure whereby all interested parties are afforded opportunity for consideration. Applications should be submitted to the Executive Board of the PTO by a deadline determined by the building Executive Board.
 - Applicants shall not be employees of the district.
 - Applicants will serve for two years excepting parents who are in the last year in the building in which case they may serve one year.
 - Selection shall be made by ballot at an open PTO Board meeting by membership present. Notification to general PTO membership via school newsletter or notice should be provided well in advance of application deadline or selection vote. Applicants should be present at this meeting to make themselves known to the membership and provide an opportunity for pertinent questions.
- Students - In each building, students shall be elected by the building student government organization.
- Community representative - The community representative(s), when available, shall be selected by the building team and shall not be an employee of the district. The community representative should not be eligible to represent any other group.
- The governing body of each constituent organization shall have the authority to fill vacancies or to hold special elections to replace its elected representatives.

Meetings

Notice of all SDM meetings shall be given to team members and shall be prominently displayed in the school building. A majority of the SDM team members shall constitute a quorum. SDM teams are required to have all stakeholder groups represented in consensus decisions.

The SDM meetings are open to anyone interested in attending. Interested attendees may request time to speak at the meeting by making this request known to the building team chair(s) under the rules established by the district committee.

Organization (chair, recorder, etc.) - to be determined by consensus of the building team.

Building team agendas and minutes will be publicized to the school community through normal posting and distribution methods.

DECISION MAKING GUIDELINES

- A decision can be made by a group if at least one member of the group has the authority to implement the decision.
- Teams should determine ways to consult with individuals directly affected by an issue. Persons directly affected will be consulted/included.
- Decisions directly affecting other buildings or the district need to be reviewed with other buildings or the district before action is taken. Decisions should not commit other buildings or the district without their knowledge, involvement, and agreement.
- Resources can be expended or allocated by a group only if the group has the authority and the resources available.
- Decisions on expenditures exceeding the group's authority can be formulated into recommendations to be submitted to the person(s) with the power to implement them.
- The District Office will support and facilitate school planning and shared decision making within buildings and the district.
- These guidelines are not meant to limit planners/decision makers. Building teams are encouraged to be innovative and consider first and foremost what they believe will improve educational programs which are consistent with District goals and directions.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The goal of the School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making process is to empower building teams to develop creative methods of improving a school's programs and services, addressing problems or issues, and realizing the school building's and the district's mission. Teams will be given freedom to determine their focus and implement and evaluate action plans to address their objectives which align with District goals and priorities.

Educational issues, as dealt with by building teams, involve building wide policy or procedural decisions that directly or indirectly address student achievement and help students meet the state learning standards. The following are examples of possible SDM issues. These examples are not meant to limit planners/decision makers but are given to provide some guidance on issues that can be addressed by the building team as well as issues falling beyond the scope of the building team.

DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY

Building Team

The building team would normally not consider issues that are governed by state or federal law or regulation. Furthermore, the building team should focus on issues that positively impact student achievement. Listed below are examples of some issues that may be examined by the building team. It is not intended that a building team would examine all of these issues, but would select these or others consistent with their annual goals.

- Developing short/long-range building goals aligned with District goals
- Improving student achievement based on student performance data
- Assessing building and student needs
- Developing master schedule
- Budget - expenditure plan for budget allocations and proposals
- Building staff professional development
- Committees and membership
- Field trip procedures
- Monitoring student progress
- Monitoring and enhancing School climate and morale
- Communication with all stakeholders
- Evaluating progress of building plans and activities
- Implementation of CORE team recommendations and District initiatives
- Promote professional learning communities.

Building Team/District Collaboration

Building teams lack the authority to decide issues that have broader district implications that may affect multiple buildings or programs, or Board of Education policy. In matters of curriculum or instruction impacting a particular CORE area, SDM input will be advisory. Below are listed examples of some issues the building team may examine and provide advice only. The source of advice or recommendation must come from the entire building team.

- Curriculum CORE team change instructional strategies
- Personnel selection process
- Inter-school/district staff development
- Grading policies
- Student ability grouping practices
- Class size
- Discipline
- Building concerns - safety, security, procedures
- Crisis response procedures

Not Building Team Issues

Below are some examples of issues that are beyond the realm of the building team.

- Contractual issues
- Evaluation of staff
- Appointment and placement of staff
- Grievances
- Seniority
- Commissioner's Regulations
- State law

MEANS AND STANDARDS TO EVALUATE IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Student achievement is defined as issues addressing all areas affecting a student's intellectual, creative, social, emotional, and physical growth and development. Improved student achievement may be accomplished through a broad range of building programs and services that improve student achievement.

Annually the building team will:

- Review building initiatives to determine building improvements or program improvements that will enhance student achievement
- Develop and implement action plans compatible with identified needs, district exit standards, and enhanced student achievement coordinated with CORE teams
- Develop and apply appropriate evaluation means to measure success of the action plan
- Report results to stakeholder groups
- Provide an annual report of progress and accomplishments to the Superintendent

To evaluate improvement in student achievement, the team will consider a variety of measures including tests, portfolios, surveys, self-assessment materials, and observations. The District Office will provide resources and support of the assessment and evaluation process, including consultation as strategies are being developed.

Any annual evaluation report of student achievement by the building teams to the board of education should identify the measures used and summarize the team's findings.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Decision Making by Consensus

Decisions shall be made by consensus. This means all members can state:

- I understand the decision
- I contributed to the decision
- I will support the decision

At least one representative from each stakeholder group (One who has a stake or interest in the outcome of the project and/or one who is affected by the project) shall participate in the consensus decisions. In order to bring closure to a decision or issue, the Chair must state "consensus has been reached."

Manner and Extent of Expected Involvement

- The principal will convene the first meeting no later than November 1 of each school year. Subsequent meetings are convened by the chair (selected by consensus of building team).
- Meetings will be scheduled at least monthly. Meeting times will be decided upon by the building team members.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Building Team

- To develop and maintain committee operating procedures
- To ensure cooperation and mutual respect, building teams will establish ground rules, e.g. time limits for meetings, shared responsibilities, etc.
- To facilitate the development of building goals which are not in conflict with district goals
- To facilitate the development and implementation of a school improvement plan based on the data obtained by assessment and evaluation processes
- To provide stakeholder groups information and opportunities to provide input into the shared decision making process
- To refer matters beyond the authority of the building team to the district committee
- To evaluate the shared decision making process of the building team on an ongoing basis and recommend changes to the district committee
- To develop and maintain those facilitation skills that promote the effectiveness of the shared decision making process
- To periodically survey constituents to identify key issues/concerns
- To use assessment data to improve student success
- To set building instructional goals consistent with identified building needs and district standards of excellence
- To develop a long-range building plan for achieving building goals and update it annually
- To monitor the progress of the plan and correct/improve decisions, as determined by the building team
- To prepare and distribute, to the school community, district committee, and Board of Education, an annual report covering the accomplishments of the team in its efforts to improve the educational achievement for students.

Roles and Responsibilities of Individual Members

- To be accountable through participation in a consensus decision making process
- To make reasonable effort to serve and attend each meeting
- To develop lines of communication with constituent groups evidenced by reporting on the work of the building team, gaining feedback from constituents on topics and issues discussed, and representing and reflecting the views of respective constituents

Role of the Chair

- Provide notice of building team meetings
- Schedule the time of the meeting with the building team and convene the meeting
- Establish agenda of the meeting with building team
- Facilitate meeting unless otherwise decided

Role of the Recorder

- Maintain and distribute minutes of meeting

Other roles

- May be developed by the building teams (for example, facilitator)

DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

- Every effort will be made to decide issues by committee consensus.
 - At any time during the dispute resolution process, the building team may decide by consensus to table the issue.
 - The dispute resolution process applies to those disputes arising from the inability to plan or make decisions pertaining to building issues. This only applies when the SDM has full authority to make the decision.
1. Disputes at the building team level shall be referred to the district committee. The district committee would, by consensus, suggest possible alternatives to the building team for consideration (e.g. an alternative solution, mediation, table the dispute, etc.).
 2. If the dispute is not resolved at level 1, the issue may be appealed by the building team to the Superintendent for resolution. The Superintendent shall provide the building team an opportunity to present diverse views and recommendations before reaching a decision.

COORDINATION OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Various federal and state programs require parental involvement in decision making. These programs are separate from this plan and are not bound by the SDM process. Any conflict between decision making by building teams and federal or state mandated programs will be referred to the Superintendent who will decide on the appropriate resolution process.

DISTRICT SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING AND SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

The district team shall consist of teachers, administrators, parents, support staff, high school students, a representative from the secretarial and nurse units; from and, when available, members of the community at large.

Group	Elem #	MS #	HS #	TOT	Selected by
Teachers	2	2	2	6	NTA
Parents	1	1	1	3	PTO Council
Administrators				4	NAA & NDA
Student(s)			3-4	3-4	Student Congress
Support Staff				1	NESPA
Community				1	BOE Recommendation
Nurse				1	NNA
Secretarial				1	NESA
Central Office				2	Superintendent & Asst. Superintendent

For purposes of this plan, teachers include all groups represented by the NTA. The listing of grade level representation by stakeholder group is only suggested. Where applicable, the term of each member is two years. Each stakeholder group will be asked to provide new members to complete the district team when a vacancy occurs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT

- To continually (at least biennially) evaluate and assess the school-based planning and shared decision making process and make recommendations for improvement.
- To develop and maintain committee operating procedures.
- To plan for and provide training for building teams, as requested.
- To facilitate communication among all stakeholders.
- To act as a resource for the building teams.

- To assist building teams with issues which exceed the authority of the building teams.
- To review any request to alter the SDM document.
- To conduct the biennial review of SDM and recommend the revised plan to the Board of Education.

PROCESS OF ALTERING THIS DOCUMENT (outside of the biennial review process)

- Recommendations in writing from any stakeholder will be presented to the district committee through a building team.
- The district committee will prepare a reaction/recommendation for review by the building teams.
- The building teams' reactions/recommendations will be returned to the district committee.
- The document can be altered by consensus of the district committee provided that all stakeholder groups are represented on the district committee as part of the consensus.
- During the biennial review process, the document can be altered by consensus of the district committee provided that all stakeholder groups are represented on the district committee as part of the consensus.
- Changes to the document will become effective upon approval of the Board of Education.

This plan has had the participation of members of the following stakeholder groups and is endorsed for use by the Niskayuna Central School District.

May, 2008

NAME PARTICIPANT GROUP

SIGNATURE(S)

Niskayuna Teachers' Association

Donna Baumgartner

Niskayuna Administrators' Association

Luke Rakoczy

John Rickert

Niskayuna Directors' Association

Edward Alston

Niskayuna PTO Council

Maria Puccio

Niskayuna Educational Secretaries Association

Danielle Audette

Niskayuna Educational Support Personnel Association

Mary Wade

Niskayuna Nurses' Association

Chris DeLuke

Niskayuna Employees Association

David Bryk

Niskayuna Assistant Superintendent

Deborah Shea

Niskayuna Superintendent

Kevin Baughman
