

School Improvement Through Shared Decision-Making

The Dubuque Community School District is committed to the philosophy that school improvement is best achieved through the process of shared decision-making. Shared decision-making has its focus in the collaborative efforts of instructional and administrative support staff along with parents, community, and, when appropriate, student representatives. This planning and decision-making process shall be outlined annually in district and school improvement plans (CSIP).

The purpose of school improvement is to keep both the school district and individual schools continually adapting in a positive manner to changes so that all students succeed at the highest level possible. School improvement is an ongoing process which may reaffirm existing policies and/or include major restructuring of schools and of approaches to teaching, learning and support services in order to assure the highest possible student performance.

The shared decision-making process provides for decisions concerning improvement to be made (1) close to where the students are educated, (2) through the participation of those most directly concerned with the students, and (3) within the context of district, state, and federal parameters. The shared decision-making process must occur within the framework of the district's comprehensive improvement plan and shall be organized and directed by the accompanying administrative guidelines.

Adopted: May 24, 1993
Revised: March 13, 2000
Revised: May 11, 2009

Administrative Guidelines

Administrative Guidelines: School Improvement through Shared Decision-Making

INTRODUCTION

At the district level, the focus of improvement efforts will be outlined in the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (CSIP), developed collaboratively by the District and School Improvement Leadership Team (D/SILT), under the direction of the Associate Superintendent. At the school level, the focus of improvement efforts will be outlined in the school's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, developed collaboratively by the school's Site Council, under the direction of the school principal.

The district CSIP will align with and contribute to the accomplishment of the district's mission. The district CSIP will align with state and federal initiatives as well as local goals as indicated through the continuous school improvement process. The district CSIP will detail the school's yearly improvement goals and objectives, action plans, anticipated timelines, needed resources, and methods for evaluating the degree to which the intended goals were met and resulted in improved student achievement.

The school level CSIP will align with and contribute to the accomplishment of district improvement goals and will detail the school's yearly improvement goals and objectives, action plans, anticipated timelines, needed resources, and methods for evaluating the degree to which the intended goals were met and resulted in improved student achievement. School level CSIPs will be submitted to the office of the Associate Superintendent according to the deadline established annually.

I. DISTRICT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP TEAM (D/SILT)

At the district level the District and School Improvement Leadership Team is charged with responsibility for development, oversight and evaluation of the district CSIP, for securing Board approval of the CSIP, and for reporting to the Board results of the CSIP evaluation. The D/SILT shall fulfill the responsibilities of the District Advisory Committee required by Iowa law. Based on the team's analysis of needs assessment data, they shall make recommendations to the board about the following components:

1. major educational needs
2. student learning goals

3. long-range goals that include, but are not limited to, the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement; and
4. harassment or bullying prevention goals, programs, training, and other initiatives.

At least annually, the D/SILT shall also make recommendations to the board with regard to, but not limited to, the following:

1. progress achieved with the annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science;
 2. progress achieved with other locally determined core indicators; and
 3. annual improvement goals for the state indicators that address reading, mathematics, and science achievement.
- A. Membership and representation –Membership on the district and school improvement leadership team is by invitation and voluntary, and shall include, but not be limited to one representative from each school from the following groups: principal, instructional staff, support staff, parents, community, and students when appropriate. All groups should be represented in a ratio sufficient to guarantee authentic participation. The roster of members will be submitted to the Board for approval in September annually.
- B. Meeting schedule –Meetings should be scheduled when they are most convenient for all members.

II. FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

At the school level the site council is charged with responsibility for development, oversight and evaluation of the school CSIP. The focus of site council work should be on those issues most closely associated with improving teaching and student learning within the instructional framework established by the district. Plans for accomplishing necessary improvements are to be outlined in the school's CSIP, for which the site council has primary responsibility in developing, communicating to constituents, facilitating the implementation, and evaluation of its success.

III. STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

Each school shall develop a set of by-laws to provide a foundation for its site council. The by-laws should contain the following sections:

- A. Statement of purpose – This section should contain language that defines the purpose of the site council and include information regarding methods of decision-making, governance, quorum, and types of issues to be addressed.
- B. Membership and representation – This section should contain information related to the composition of the council, membership selection process, length of service, and replacement procedures. Membership on site councils is voluntary, and shall include, but not be limited to representation from the following: principal, instructional staff, support staff, parents, community, and students when appropriate. All groups should be represented in a ratio sufficient to guarantee authentic participation.
- C. Officers – This section should contain information regarding site council officers and their selection process, length of term, and other conditions.
- D. Meeting schedule – This section should contain designation of a regular meeting schedule. Meetings should be scheduled when they are most convenient for all council members. Participants shall not be paid for participation on the site council; however, teachers who volunteer for service on a site council shall be entitled to one day of *Site Council Leave of Absence* each year, and those teachers serving on a site council three-fourths of whose meetings are scheduled after the regular work day shall be entitled to an additional day of *Site Council Leave*.
- E. Agenda – This section should contain the method of submitting items for inclusion on an agenda, the person(s) responsible for developing the agenda, timeline for agenda, and the process for timely communication of agendas to all representative groups.
- F. Minutes – This section should contain timelines and a description of the method for communicating meeting minutes to all representative groups.
- G. Committees/Action Teams – This section should outline intended committees and/or those organized on an *ad hoc* basis for specific purposes relating to providing leadership for accomplishing the goals established in the school’s CSIP.
- H. Procedure for Settling Differences – This section should identify steps to manage differences of opinion expressed by members of the site council or their

constituents when these differences cannot be resolved through the established decision-making process.

The by-laws shall be written so that they do not conflict with federal or state law, district policy, or provisions of master agreements or memoranda of understanding with labor groups. By-laws should be reviewed at least once per year and may be amended at any time by a method identified in the site council's by-laws. A copy of each council's current version of by-laws should be kept on file at each school and available for review upon request.