

School Councils: Shared-Decision Making

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Paradise Valley Unified School District

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Definition

— [Shared decision-making: An inclusionary process where people affected by the decision are involved in the process

— [A.R.S. 15-351

A. The purpose of this section is to ensure that individuals who are affected by the outcome of a decision at the school site share in the decision-making process.

B. Each school shall establish a school council. A governing board may delegate to a school council the responsibility to develop a curriculum and may delegate any additional powers that are reasonably necessary to accomplish decentralization. The school council shall take into consideration the ethnic composition of the local community and, except as provided in section 15-352, shall consist of the following members:

1. Parents or guardians of pupils enrolled in the school. A parent or guardian who is employed by the school district may serve as a member of the school council if the parent or guardian is not employed at the same school where the parent or guardian's child is enrolled.

2. Teachers.

3. Non-certified employees.

4. Community members.

5. Pupils, if the school is a high school.

6. The principal of the school.

C. Each group specified in subsection B of this section shall select its school council appointees and shall submit the names of its respective representatives to the principal. The initial representatives shall be selected at public meetings held at the school site, and, thereafter, representatives shall be selected by their groups in the manner determined by the school council. Schools shall give notice of the public meeting where the initial representatives of the groups shall be selected, clearly stating its purpose, time and place. The notice shall be posted in at least three different locations at the school site and in the community and shall be given to pupils for delivery to their parents or guardians.

D. The governing board shall determine the initial number of school council members. Thereafter, the school council shall determine the number. The number of teachers and parents or guardians of pupils enrolled at the school shall be equal. Teachers and parents or guardians of pupils enrolled at the school shall constitute a majority of the school council members.

Beliefs

- [Focus on school improvement and student-centered decisions
- [Decision-making requires a structured process
- [It takes more than one decision-making group to administer a school: School Council, Data Team, FAC, Staff Development, Technology Integration, Student Advisory, Student Behavior, etc.
- [Involve people affected by the decision
- [All committees are autonomous (no outside veto power)

Beliefs - cont.

Committees meet to make decisions

Use a pyramid structure to gather information, narrowing from a broad base

Effective meetings are essential

The principal must actively participate

Effective decision-making takes time

Trust is essential

Trust is the vehicle for 2nd order change to occur

Beliefs - cont.

— [Training is necessary - train principals first and principals train school councils and staff at their sites

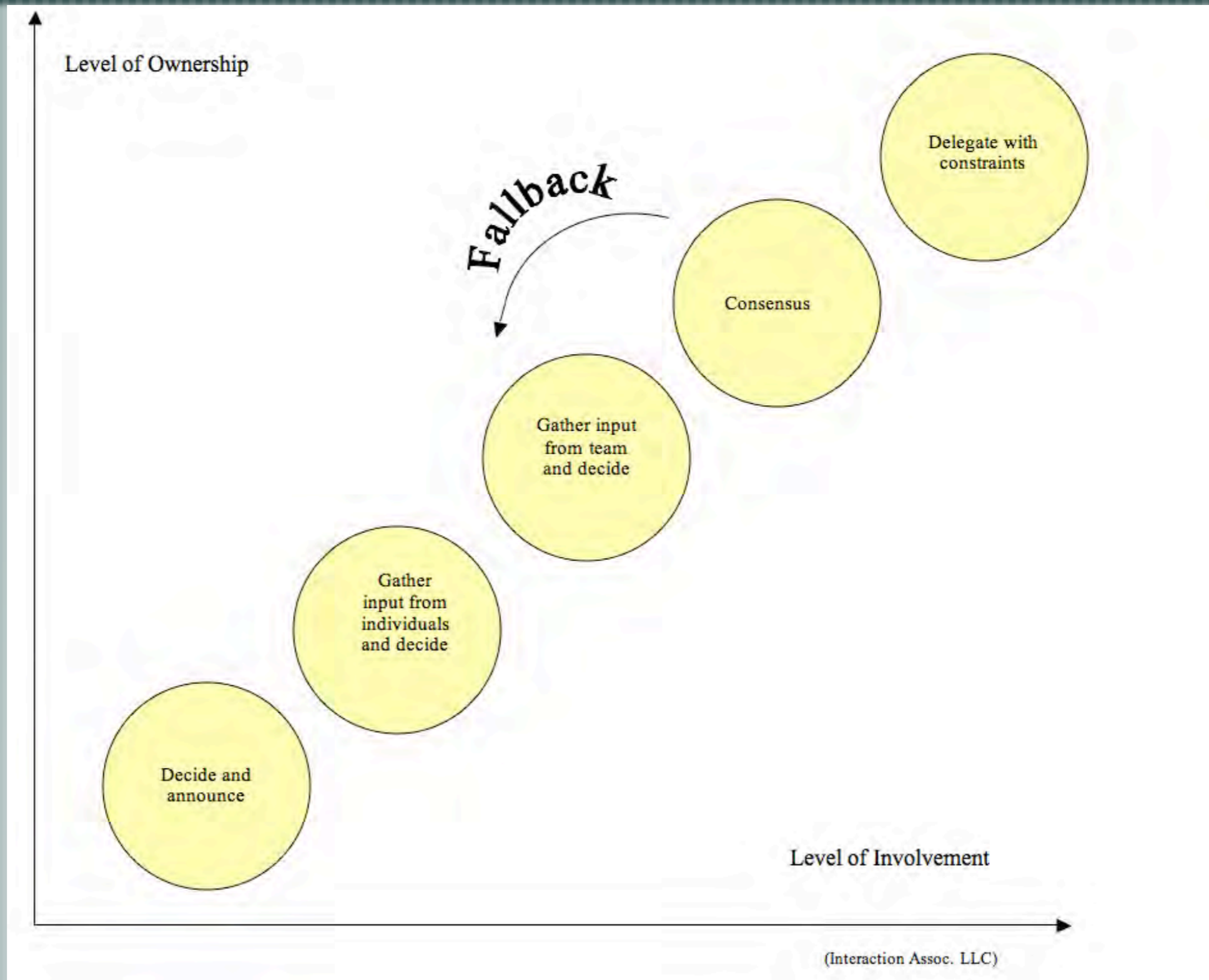
— [Practice makes permanent

— [Levels of decision-making must be clearly defined and understood by everyone in the school community

— [Group decision-making is better than individual decision-making

— [Create authentic opportunities for school councils to make decisions by consensus

Levels of Involvement in Decision-Making



Goal: Maximum Appropriate Involvement

— [Before a decision is made, a leader must decide and share up front the level of involvement needed from the team and the rationale for that level of involvement.

— [Selecting the appropriate decision-making method is a conscious choice made by the person(s) accountable for the outcome of the decision.

Questions requiring answers before a decision-making process begins:

1. Who needs to be involved?
2. How do they need to be involved?
3. How much time can be spent on making the decision?
4. Who has information/expertise that can contribute to making a quality decision?

Factors to Consider:

- [**Need for Buy-in/Capability**
- [**Time Available**
- [**Importance of Decision**
- [**Information Needed**
- [**Capability**
- [**Building Teamwork**

Decide and Announce

The leader makes a decision with little or no input, then announces the decision to those who will be affected by, or must carry out, the decision.

Possible Advantages:

- △ Decision can be made quickly.
- △ Leader is in immediate control of the decision.
- △ Implementation can begin immediately.

Possible Disadvantages:

- ▽ May not be the most well-informed decision.
- ▽ Those assigned to carry out the decision may balk at implementation.
- ▽ Those affected by the decision may harbor resentment about not having been asked their opinion.

Keys to Success:

- Explain the context for the decision and announce the decision itself.
- Explain reasons for choosing the "Decide and Announce" approach.

Gather Input from Individuals and Decide

The leader gathers input from selected individuals (ideas, suggestions, information). The leader then makes a decision.

Possible Advantages:

- △ More information with which to make a decision.
- △ Increased likelihood that decision will be carried out.
- △ Doesn't require a meeting of all the players.

Possible Disadvantages:

- ▽ Some players may feel excluded.
- ▽ If the decision is in conflict with the input, players may undermine decision or be less likely to provide input the next time.

Keys to Success:

- ☑ Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale.
- ☑ Explain what considerations or criteria you'll be taking into account in order to make the decision.
- ☑ Be clear about the type of input you need from individuals to make the decision.

Gather Input from the Team and Decide

*The leader asks the team members to share their ideas in a meeting.
The leader decides after hearing from the team.*

Possible Advantages:

- △ More creative thinking because of group synergy.
- △ Increased likelihood of well-informed decision.
- △ People feel included and may be more committed to implementation.

Possible Disadvantages:

- ▽ Takes more time.
- ▽ May surface issues or conflicts inappropriate for that meeting.
- ▽ If resulting decision is in conflict with input, people may sabotage implementation

Keys to Success:

- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale.
- Set guidelines for the type of involvement and input you want.
- Set a timeline for the discussion.

Consensus

A consensus decision is one that each and every member of the team is willing to support and help implement. All key stakeholders have had an opportunity to give their opinion and to understand the implications of various options. All members, including the leader, have the same formal power to support or block proposals. If consensus cannot be reached, the leader has a fallback decision-making option.

Possible Advantages:

- ▲ Educates the team through active participation.
- ▲ High level of support for decision.
- ▲ Quicker implementation because more people are already up and running on the issues at hand.

Possible Disadvantages:

- ▼ May take more time.
- ▼ Team members may not have the collaborative skills needed to reach agreement.

Keys to Success:

- Explain exactly what consensus means in the given situation and why you've chosen it as the appropriate level of involvement.
- Clearly outline the constraints, including time and financial limitations.
- Identify a fallback level of involvement if consensus can't be reached within the specified time period.

Delegate Decision with Constraints

The leader defines the decision that needs to be made in the form of a question(s), clarifies the constraints on the decision (e.g., budget, timeframe, quality requirements), and delegates the decision to others. The leader does not alter the decision as long as it adheres to the constraints.

Possible Advantages:

- △ Frees leader up to deal with other issues.
- △ Minimizes undermining of the decision.
- △ Develops leadership capability of others

Possible Disadvantages:

- ▽ Team may not have the skill, experience or perspective to make an informed decision.
- ▽ May take more time.
- ▽ Team may take on issues outside the bounds of the task.

Keys to Success:

- Explain how people will be involved in the decision-making process and give your rationale.
- Clearly state constraints.
- Build in milestone points for process and content checks.
- Be available to answer questions.

Roles: Principal

- Share ownership of school
- Develop vision for school aligned with district
- Facilitate school council decision-making process
- Involve those affected
- Participate
- Be a resource
- Live with decisions
- Enforce decisions

Roles: School Council Members

- Understand the vision and mission of the school
- Understand the role of the principal
- Participate - actively
- Increase knowledge
- Understand role in the process
- Learn to work for consensus
- Trust
- Parents support decision
- Staff support and enforce decision
- Members think globally with students' best interests in mind

Effective Meetings

— [Agenda:

- Predetermined w/items solicited from council members
- Distributed in advance to school council
- Timeframe listed on agenda
- Outcomes listed on agenda
- Publicly posted in at least three places at least 24 hrs. in advance

Effective Meetings - cont.

Participant Roles

- Facilitator

- Scribe

- Timekeeper

- Process Observer

Effective Meetings - cont.

Process

- Everyone involved
- Sufficient discussion
- Appropriate agreement and disagreement
- Task oriented
- Meets needs of participants
- Clear decisions
- Consensus model

Effective Meetings - cont.

Formalities

- Establish consistent meeting times
- Publish meeting time and place (website/newsletter)
- Provide minutes to school community in timely manner
 - Minutes must accurately reflect meeting outcomes (short and to the point)
 - List attendees, previous minutes approval, scribe name, date/time/location of meeting, date/time/location of next meeting
- If a committee member is absent no substitute will attend
- All necessary back-up material is provided at meetings
- The Uniform Code for Financial Records Memo 214 requires that school councils determine how undesignated tax credit contributions are used.

School Council Membership

Minimum Requirement

K-8

- ◆ school principal
- ◆ 2 certified staff
- ◆ 1 support staff
- ◆ 2 parents
- ◆ 1 community member

9-12

- ◆ school principal
- ◆ 3 certified staff
- ◆ 1 support staff
- ◆ 3 parents
- ◆ 1 community member
- ◆ 1 student

May add more members provided the number of certified staff and parents is the same.

School Council

- [Membership Selection

- Council members to be selected by each representative group
- Build in differences (Fullan)

Change

— [Create a Moral Purpose/Collective Efficacy (Fullan/McREL)

— [Anticipate Implementation Dips (Fullan)

Summary of Key Expectations

School Council meetings take place at least once per month

Members are selected by the representative groups

Members are responsible for soliciting input from their representative groups

Agenda items should be solicited from School Council members in advance

School Council members should receive a copy of the agenda in advance (earliest possible if they need to gather input from representative groups)

Agendas are publicly posted at least 24 hours in advance

Minutes are recorded promptly and easily accessible on websites and in newsletters.

Identify specific areas for School Councils to be decision-making bodies, not just advisory in nature

The United Code for Financial Records Memo 214 requires that school councils determine how undesignated tax credit contributions are used.

Thank You...

for sharing in the decision-making process.

Please use this keynote presentation for your first
school council meeting.