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# SHARED LEADERSHIP

The School Improvement  
Team



## A School Improvement Team –

- is a group of people who represent your school community (teachers, parents, community leaders, and administrators) who are interested in making your school a better place for learning and teaching
- decides what your school should do to improve student performance
- gathers and analyzes information that can be used to make decisions that drive changes in your school

The purpose of the School Improvement Team is to oversee the School Improvement Plan. The team develops and revises the plan, setting each year's objectives and outlining the activities related to the objectives, and establishes evaluation procedures to determine effectiveness in meeting objectives. The School Improvement Team reviews student learning data (including state assessment scores), program descriptions, curriculum, schedules, and the allocation of resources. The School Improvement Team regularly solicits the input and feedback of teachers, parents, and students.

### Building a School Improvement Team

**Choosing a representative team:** To ensure diversity, the School Improvement Team must collectively represent all the students enrolled in the school. The team should include teachers, the principal, parents, support staff, community partners, and students (especially at the high school level).

**Size:** Generally a team of seven to twenty members would be optimal. Team size is dependent on the size and complexity of the school it represents.

**Incorporating existing groups:** If the school has different teams/committees working in the school, identify the work each one is doing. Ask: Does the work correlate with what the School Improvement Team is working on to improve teaching and learning? If yes, include representatives of the different teams or committees so the improvement team can coordinate the work of all of them.

## Making It Work – Putting the School's Needs First Means Working Well as a Team

### Before your team begins

- Decide how often the team will meet. The team should meet as often as needed in order to get the work done. Most teams meet once or twice each month. Remember that there will be more work than can be completed at the meetings. Smaller work groups of representative team members may need to meet between regular meetings.
- Members should agree that they want the team to be an authentic, high performance group and acknowledge that it takes time for a group to learn how to work together.
- Establish a written agreement/ground rules about how the team's members will interact. This agreement should be seen as a work in progress and a reflective tool, not as a list of rules.
- Develop standards for the team's various functions and work by setting clear meeting schedules, preparing agendas, developing procedures for recording decisions, and planning between meetings.
- Create ways to critique and challenge the team so it remains dynamic and creative.
- It is critical that the team learn to assess its own progress and adapt the rules or structure accordingly.



### More Resources for Shared Leadership

The following information is from *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, by Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies (pp. 190-191).

#### Preparing Parents to Become Effective Members of Councils and Committees

Many advisory committees and school site councils are not as effective as they could be. From the members' point of view, such committees are worth the effort only if administrators take them seriously. Here are a few ideas to make them work well.

- ✦ Give council and committee members staff support and resources to do their work—for example, access to computers, copy and fax machines, and telephones.
- ✦ Make sure they have important problems and issues to deal with—how to improve the achievement gap in math and raise reading scores, not just selecting a color to repaint the lunchroom or a theme for the annual awards ceremony.
- ✦ Give families honest and timely information about budgets, policies, and student achievement. Use test data to identify problem areas that need improvement.
- ✦ Make training available for participants (including teachers). Knowledge is power. The more that parents understand education issues, the more powerful and constructive partners they will be.
- ✦ Encourage parent associations and councils to reach out to families who have not been involved.
- ✦ Make sure that the councils and school officials take committee recommendations seriously.

Involving family and community members on councils and committees means that different points of view and opposing interests will be represented. This is the whole point, of course, but it means there will sometimes be conflict and disagreement. This is a good thing. Better decisions usually emerge from debate and compromise.

Henderson, Anne T., Mapp, Karen L., Johnson, Vivian, R., & Davies, Don. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. New York, NY: The New Press.

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