



## **Shared Decision Making Plan 2023-2025**

### **Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools**

*Ensuring opportunities for learning, personal growth and social responsibility*

WRITTEN

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## Introduction

The BH-BL School District is well known for its success in educating all of its students to their full potential and has long had a history of engaging staff and the community in planning to improve instruction and outcomes. From the very founding of the district, partnership between the BH-BL community, parents, teachers and school leaders has been a hallmark of “the Burnt-Hills Way.” In 1915, parents convinced the community to consolidate several one-room school houses to form a K-12 school so that students could be educated through 12th grade here in their own community. Throughout the 20th century, the community invested in the district and it grew, at a high point, to over 5000 students. In the 1970s, teachers sat together with administration to work out issues in a shared manner. This cooperation helped to avoid the work-stoppages that plagued many other local districts. At each step in its history, the school district has been committed to the belief that decisions are in the best interest of students when appropriately shared. In 1994, when the NYS Education Department began requiring a plan for participation by teachers and parents in school based planning, it was natural for the district to rely on its rich history of shared governance to meet the requirements of the regulation. At its most basic level, the principle of *shared decision making* holds that those influenced directly by a decision should have an opportunity to understand the decision-making process and have an opportunity to influence the result.

Our recent capital projects, the hiring of an elementary principal, the building council structure, and the Re-Opening Committee during the COVID-19 pandemic are all examples of successful shared decision making. In each case, those affected by the decision had an opportunity to be a part of the process.

This plan serves two purposes:

**Part I: Requirements of NYSED 100.11:** Part I provides specific guidance for the composition, responsibilities, and conduct of a School-Based Planning Team in each school according to the NYSED Regulation 100.11; and

**Part II: General Shared Decision Making Principles and Guidelines:** Part II provides general principles of Shared Decision Making that apply not only to school-based planning teams (Building Councils) but to groups and committees that work across all parts of the district in the interest of making consensus-based recommendations to administration and the Board of Education. The end result of every process shall be to improve educational performance and shall be conducted in a cooperative, respectful and open manner.

It is understood that after using the SDM process to gather the appropriate input in any situation, final authority on all matters rests with the Superintendent and the Board of Education.



## **Part I: Building Councils: Shared Decision Making as Described in NYSED Regulation 100.11**

- A. **Highlights of the Regulation.** In 1992, the Board of Regents passed NYSED regulation 100.11 (Plan for the Participation by Teachers and Parents in School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making). This regulation outlined specific requirements for ensuring that there is a **school-based planning team (in our case known as Building Council and/or Planning Council)** to advise the principal and the district administration on matters related to improving the educational performance of all students in the school. Important aspects of the plan are listed below:
- a. A school-based planning team should exist at each building. This collective group of planning teams satisfies the [NYSED Regulation 100.11](#) requirements in full.
  - b. NYSED Regulation 100.11 is non-specific regarding the make-up of the school-based planning teams. It requires the membership of teachers, parents, and administration but is silent on the specific numbers and composition of the team. [A subsequent Commissioner's decision has noted that while the regulation does not designate exact numbers or require that representation be equal, the intent of the regulation is that all constituencies participate equitably (NYSED Commissioner's Decision 13403).] The regulation offers boards of education the option of including support staff, students, and other community members to be part of these teams.
  - c. The Regulation requires that the district create a *District Plan for Participation by Teachers and Parents in School-Based Planning and Shared Decision Making*. This plan is created (and reviewed biennially) by a committee consisting of the superintendent, administrators selected by the organization representing the administrators, teachers selected by the organization representing the teachers, and parents selected by the district's parent organization. The regulation identifies six elements that must be specified in the district's plan:
    - i. the educational issues which will be subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making at the building level by teachers, parents, administrators, and, at the discretion of the Board of Education or BOCES, other parties such as students, school district support staff, and community members;
    - ii. the manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties;
    - iii. the means and standards by which all parties shall evaluate improvement in student achievement;
    - iv. the means by which all parties will be held accountable for the decisions which they share in making;
    - v. the process whereby disputes presented by the participating parties about the educational issues being decided upon will be resolved at the local level; and
    - vi. the manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision making will be coordinated with and met by the overall plan.
- B. **Collective Bargaining.** Regulation 100.11 specifies that any plan for participation of teachers and/or administrators in school based decision making that has been developed or implemented as the result of a collective bargaining agreement between the Board of Education and local organizations shall incorporate such

negotiated plans as part of the district plan. At BHBL, the following contractual provisions pertaining to Site-Based Planning should be incorporated in the district plan:

- a. The BHBLTA Teachers contract requires that 50% of the “voting members” of each Building Council be teachers.
- b. The Teachers Association building president and the building principal will act as co-coordinators for the Building Council.
- c. The BHBL Teachers contract requires that the council determine its own ground rules and will be open to the school community.
- d. The BHBL Teachers Contract states: “Decisions are to be arrived at through consensus whenever possible. An impasse may be resolved by a 75% vote of the total council membership in support of a council decision.”
- e. The BHBL Teachers contract requires that each elementary Building Council have at least seven (7) teachers-one from each curriculum council plus one from staff development.
- f. The BHBL Teachers Contract outlines an annual planning process that the Building Councils should undertake. (include but not limited to)
- g. There is no contract language specific to site-based planning (Building Councils) in the CSEA or Administrator contracts.

C. **Authority.** NYSED Regulation 100.11 does not grant specific authority to a school-based planning team to enforce decisions but rather creates a framework for how discussions should take place. Subsequent NYSED Commissioner’s decisions [eg. Appeal of Zaleski & Appeal of Tulip] have clarified that school-based planning teams cannot replace the statutory authority of the Board of Education and as such serve as a body to advise but not compel administrative action. Commissioner’s decisions can be researched [here](#).

D. **Six Elements of BH-BL Site-Based Planning (Building/Planning Council)**

- a. **Agenda Items.***[From 100.11: The plan must specify the educational issues which will be subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making at the building level by teachers, parents, administrators, and, at the discretion of the board of education or BOCES, other parties such as students, school district support staff, and community members;]* Each committee has broad discretion over the things they would like to discuss in monthly meetings. All members should be permitted and encouraged to submit items for consideration. Ultimately the agenda is decided upon by the co-chairs. The following ideas should be taken into consideration when identifying items for the agenda:
  - i. The statute identifies that “the purpose of school-based planning and shared decision making shall be to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status, race, sex, language background, or disability.”
  - ii. There is value in a basic outline for every meeting but there should also be flexibility. Some items on the agenda are informational and others require discussion and a decision.
  - iii. It is valuable to use constituency groups and advisory groups (i.e. Teacher Association Rep. Council, Principals Parent Advisory Group) to help determine issues that may be good agenda items.

iv. Questions helpful in determining which **informational** topics or issues are appropriate for the Building Council:

1. Could this item be shared clearly and accurately by some other method?
2. Is the item related to student development and/or educational performance?
3. Does this item require discussion and clarification in order to promote clear communication with constituencies?

v. Questions helpful in determining which **issues** are appropriate for the Building Council Shared Decision Making process:

1. Is the item proposed for the agenda the best use of the Building Council's time? Is there another venue where a decision on this item may be more appropriate?
2. Does a decision on this item affect student development and/or educational performance?
3. Would the Building Council have the resources available to implement a decision on this item?
4. Would any or all members of the Building Council have the authority to implement a decision on the proposed item?
5. Will a decision on that item impact one building, several buildings, or the entire district? (See II.E.b below for decisions affecting more than one building or level.)
6. Is the topic or issue addressed governed by any of the negotiated contracts or Board of Education Policy?
7. Would all members of the Building Council accept responsibility for a decision (made by consensus) on this item?

b. **Make-up and Logistics of the Building Council.** *[From 100.11: The plan must specify the manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties. ]*

i. Parent Participation and Involvement

1. Selection of Parent/Guardian Representatives: Three (3) parents selected through a process run by the PTA. At least one parent representative will be the PTA president or their designee. The other two will be selected at large from both PTA members and non-PTA members. If none of the three parents/guardians are also members of the Special Education PTA (SEPTA), then the PTA president will request a fourth parent from SEPTA leadership. This process for selecting the representatives will be described in the PTA governing procedures.
2. Parent Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the parent representatives to work through their school's PTA to inform and gather feedback from their full parent community on topics shared at Building Council meetings.

ii. Employee/Student Participation and Involvement

1. Teachers on Building Council will be selected by the Teachers' Association.
2. A teacher will be selected as one of the co-chairs of the Building Council.
3. CSEA Members will be selected by the CSEA.

4. At the discretion of each Council, student members may be a part of the high school (where appropriate) site-based planning team. If included, one or two student representatives will be selected by the Student Government Organization (SGO). Any students chosen must have the final approval of the high school principal.
  5. The building principal is a member of the Building Council and will serve as a co-chair. Assistant Principals may also serve on the site-based planning team at the request of the building principal.
- iii. Meeting Schedule
    1. Building Council meetings should be held monthly.
    2. Meeting times will typically be in the mid-late afternoon time frame. Parents seeking to serve on the Building Council should consider the schedule prior to volunteering to serve. Nothing would prevent the council from deciding to hold meetings at a later time. Members can request remote access if unable to attend in person. Co-chairs are encouraged to provide a videoconference option when possible and appropriate.
  - iv. Additional Information regarding the recruitment, selection, and training of members for shared decision making teams such as the Building/Planning Council can be found in Section II.A
  - v. General principles governing shared decision making that are applicable to the manner and extent of expected involvement of all parties involved in the Building Council can be found in Section II of this plan.
- c. **Evaluating Student Achievement.** *[From 100.11: The plan must address the means and standards by which all parties shall evaluate improvement in student achievement.]* The purpose of the New York State Learning Standards and the Shared Decision Making regulation and process is to improve student achievement. The school council shall undertake an annual planning process that includes, but is not limited to:
- i. Using school performance information to improve student success.
  - ii. Setting building instructional goals consistent with identified building needs and district standards of excellence, Framework for Planning, and the BH-BL 21st Century Framework for Learning.
  - iii. Reviewing the organization and design of the instructional delivery system and student support services.
  - iv. Maintaining a direct relationship with the K-12 Curriculum Committees and the district Staff Development Committee.
  - v. Accepting, reviewing and prioritizing requests for building level summer curriculum projects. Each Building Council will send a professional representative to a joint meeting with the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to review all summer curriculum work requests.
  - vi. Evaluating student achievement in relation to the identified building goals and the district standards of excellence.
  - vii. Developing a long range building plan for achieving building goals and updating it annually.
  - viii. Monitoring the progress of the plan.
  - ix. Accepting responsibility for presenting the five-year plan to the Board of Education.
  - x. Reporting the results to the school community.

- d. **Accountability.** *[From 100.11: The plan must specify the means by which all parties will be held accountable for the decisions which they share in making;]* Once every other year, School Building Councils must assess the success of their shared decision making and school-based management processes and provide a report to the Superintendent to be used in required reporting to SED. A copy of this report should be sent to the heads of all stakeholder groups including the Teachers Association, the PTA, the CSEA, and the Administrators Association. This assessment must be based on data pertaining to improvements in student achievement and stakeholder beliefs about their level of involvement in school and district decision making. The term stakeholder includes teachers, staff, administrators, parents, students, and community members.
  
- e. **Dispute Resolution.** *[The plan should specify the process whereby disputes presented by the participating parties about the educational issues being decided upon will be resolved at the local level;]* In general, it is expected that Building Councils reach consensus decisions whenever possible (see II.F for more information). Impasse may be resolved by a 75% vote of the total council membership.
  
- f. **Compliance.** *[The plan should specify the manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision making will be coordinated with and met by the overall plan.]* Parents/guardians are active participants of all Building Councils and other SDM committees. Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate via district-recognized parent/guardian organizations, community announcements, school newsletters, public forums and personal invitations. The involvement of parents/guardians in school planning and decision-making does not conflict with any state and federal requirements addressing the same. Building Councils and other SDM committees adhere to the regulations for parent/guardian involvement in special education, academic intervention services and other programs. Any conflict between decision making by a Building/Planning Council (or any SDM committee) and federal- or state-mandated programs will be referred to the Superintendent or his/her designee who will decide on the appropriate resolution.

E. **Board Policy.** The school board addresses the composition and function of the school building councils in [Policy P2265](#).





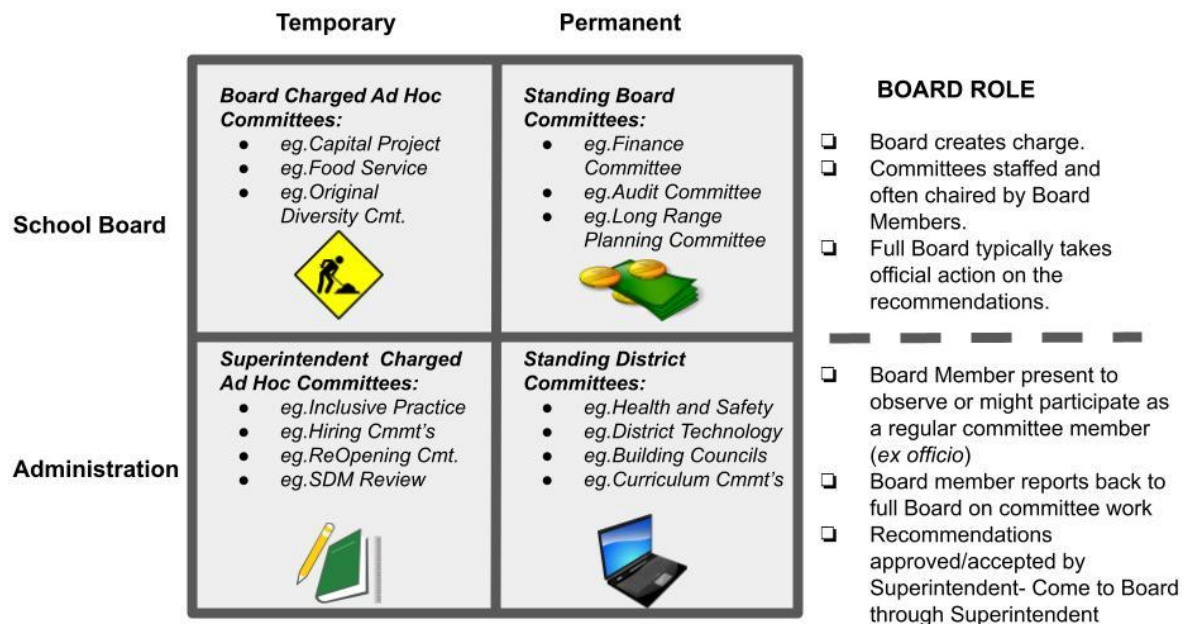
## **Part II. General Shared Decision Making Principles and Guidelines**

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District is committed to the belief that decisions are in the best interest of students when appropriately shared. We agree that shared decision making (SDM) is an essential element of district operations. This commitment is foundational to our success. Shared decision making should not be limited to legally required Building Councils discussed in Part I. The Board of Education expects that all committees in the district follow the general SDM principles and guidelines outlined herein to the greatest extent practicable.

- A. **Formation of Committees: Awareness, Recruitment, Selection, and Training** - The composition of SDM committees will vary based upon the type and function of the group.
- a. **Composition.** Wherever the composition of a committee is governed by NYSED Education Law or collective bargaining agreements, those requirements will be followed. In all other cases, the district should seek to have every committee include a broad and representative stakeholder group. However, it would be impractical and not appropriate for every committee across the district to contain members from every constituent group at all times. For committees not governed by the NYS Part 100.11 regulations or other regulatory or contractual language, the Board of Education (for Board-level Committees [see II.B] ) or the Superintendent (for district-level Committees [see II.B] ) will have final responsibility for determining the specific make-up of committees. This should be done in consultation with the appropriate bargaining units and PTA/PTSAs, depending on the needs of the specific committee.
  - b. **General Awareness of SDM Opportunities and Process.** The district will make use of relevant technologies to make all constituent groups aware of issues that have been submitted for SDM committee consideration. The [BH-BL Shared Decision Making webpage](#), social media, and daily reports via email to parents/guardian and community members, who have registered to receive them via School Messenger, are all appropriate venues for raising awareness of SDM issues and receiving input in a timely manner. PTA meetings, newsletters and district bulletins are also good methods for sharing information on decisions that have been made and for seeking additional input where deadlines are less of an issue. The SDM Plan will be made available on the district webpage.
  - c. **Employee Recruitment, Selection, and Training.** Employee bargaining units will be responsible for recruiting and selecting employees as needed for committees. All new employees and Board of Education members shall receive training on SDM principles and processes to create awareness of their rights and responsibilities to participate in input and decision making that will affect them or their group. This training will be provided collaboratively by the Superintendent of Schools, or designees, the Administrative Association President, or designees and Teachers Association president, or designees. This training will be conducted using training materials developed by the 2018 SDM Review Committee.
  - d. **Parents and Community Member Recruitment, Selection, and Training.** Participation of parents/guardians and community members on site-based planning teams (Building Councils) and certain other committees is a critical part of the Part 100.11 Shared Decision Making Regulations. Providing parent representatives an opportunity to provide a parental point of view as decisions are being made that affect their schools is critical to the success of the district. Recruitment and training of parents will depend upon the specific type of committee, as follows:

- i. *Building Council* - Recruitment and selection of parents for Building Council is the responsibility of the PTA/PTSA as outlined above. The building principal will ensure that community members who are selected to serve on Building Councils receive training similar to that received by the staff and Board of Education.
  - ii. *PTA/PTSA* - The PTA/PTSAs are encouraged to operate according to the general principles of shared decision making. Building principals will ensure that training occurs for PTA board members.
  - iii. *Parent/Community Members on Board and District Committees* - When at-large community (including non-parent) representation in committee membership is needed, the district should utilize all methods of communication including web page, social media, parent/guardian email lists, SNN, and *Headlines and Happenings* email blast to identify volunteers. Depending on the type of committee that the individuals are being recruited for, the Board of Education (for Board Committees) or the Superintendent (for District Committees) will identify a selection process for seating members on the committee. Co-chairs will be responsible for the training of these committee members.
- e. **Orientation.** Whenever a committee begins its work (or at the beginning of a school year for standing committees), the co-chairs of the committee will be responsible for providing orientation to the Plan and processes for all new staff. \*See attachment 1. Mandatory Checklist for Shared Decision Making Committees.

B. **Types of Committees-** There are four (4) ways that a committee can be created (charged). Committees can be charged by either the Board of Education or the Superintendent (Administration). Some committees are charged for a short timeframe to address a specific question or problem. These are referred to as *ad hoc committees*. Other committees are more permanent, meeting and continuing year after year. These committees are referred to as *standing committees*. Figure 1 provides examples of each type of committee:



**Figure 1. Types of Committees in BH-BL**

- a. **Ad Hoc Board Committees** - There are times when the Board of Education would like to have a committee formed to study and make specific recommendations on a particular topic or issue. Specific examples include the 2013 and 2018 Capital Project Committees, the 2019 Diversity Committee, and the committee formed to investigate additional revenue sources for the Food Services program in 2014-15. The board will follow the guidelines in BH-BL BoE Policies [P2250](#) and [P2260](#) in the formation of these ad hoc Board of Education committees.
  
- b. **Standing Board Committees** - There are several permanent Board of Education committees that work throughout the school year. Examples include the Finance Committee, Policy Committee and Advocacy Committee. Membership on these committees is determined by the Board of education and changes each school year. They typically include three (3) or more board members and sometimes include members of the public (i.e. Audit Committee).
  
- c. **Ad Hoc District Committees** - There are times when the Superintendent will find it necessary to form a committee for a short time to investigate a specific issue and issue specific recommendations. The purpose of referring an issue to an ad hoc SDM committee is to improve the quality of education for all students. Ad Hoc Committees are expected to follow SDM principles. Additionally, district level *Ad Hoc Committees* should observe the following guidelines:
  - i. Administrators will be sensitive to the number of Ad Hoc Committees that are being charged at any given point.
  - ii. When an Ad Hoc Committee is necessary, the Superintendent will create a charge for the committee. The charge to an *ad hoc* SDM committee should include:
    1. Identification of the person or group providing the charge
    2. A clear statement of the problem/question to be addressed
    3. A definition of committee membership
    4. An opportunity to seek clarification of the charge
    5. Clear expectations and a clearly defined role of the committee
    6. Clearly stated authority of the committee and its members
    7. A directive to consider financial impacts if necessary
    8. A realistic timeline with flexibility when appropriate
    9. Support for a decision making process that will arrive at a conclusion based on data, research and expertise.
  - iii. The superintendent will provide a draft of the charge to the leadership of all affected stakeholder groups for their input. Stakeholder groups will provide feedback on the charge within one week. Once the charge is finalized it will be sent out to the entire district by the district administration. The leadership of stakeholder groups will be responsible for gathering and providing the names of individuals who will serve on the committee to the District. Names will be provided to the district within one week of the distribution of the charge. Except in special circumstances, the first meeting of the committee should be scheduled two weeks after the finalization of the committee membership.

- iv. The leadership of the stakeholder groups will determine the chair structure with the approval of the Superintendent (see paragraph II.C.a).
  - v. After the Ad Hoc Committee finishes its work it will issue a report to the superintendent. The superintendent will provide a written response to the ad hoc committee's recommendations in a timely fashion. This response should include an explanation for any recommendations from the committee that were not supported by the district.
- d. **Standing District Committees** - There are a number of standing district level committees. These include but are not limited to Technology, Health and Safety, APPR, Insurance, Diversity, and the Staff Development Plan Committee. Standing committees are expected to follow the SDM principles outlined in this document. If the superintendent rejects recommendations of a standing SDM committee, the superintendent will provide a written response which includes an explanation for any recommendations from the committee that were not supported by the district.
- i. **Building Council** - Building Council is a special type of Standing District Committee. This is the building level shared decision making committee, designed to deal with issues that arise affecting curriculum, instruction, school climate and student development in a specific building. As discussed in **Part I** above, the purpose of school-based planning and shared decision making shall be to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status, race, sex, language background, or disability. The Building Councils satisfy the requirements of [NYSED Commissioner's Regulation 100.11](#). The functioning of the Building Council is also discussed specifically in the [Teacher Association contract](#) and in [Board Policy P2265](#). In the rare case that a superintendent would not be able to support a decision made by a Building Council, the superintendent will come to the specific Building Council to discuss the matter with members of the Council in person. Following that meeting, if the superintendent still cannot support the decision, or if a compromise cannot be reached, the superintendent will provide the Council with a written explanation of the district's position.
  - ii. **Curriculum Committees**- Curriculum committees exist for ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, Special Education, and Health/PE. Each curriculum committee is made up of:
    - 5 teachers
      - 3 elementary teachers (CCRs) [one from each building],
      - 1 middle school teacher (MCR)
      - 1 HS teacher (Department Representative)
      - \*CCRs and MCRs are elected by their respective faculties (Co-Chair selected from among the 5 teachers)
    - 1 administrator (K12 or Director). (Co-chair)

Curriculum committees serve as an advisory/working group for the Building Councils, bringing subject focused expertise to building council decisions. These groups should follow the general principles of SDM. Specifically they should recognize that the work that they do will affect multiple buildings and as such they should keep in regular contact with all building councils.

Ultimately building councils should achieve consensus on approval of curriculum council recommendations. Section II.E.b provides important guidance for decisions that affect more than one building or level.

### C. Roles and Responsibilities on Shared Decision Making Committees

#### a. Chair/Co-Chair Selection:

- i. **Board Committees:** The Board of Education will identify the Chair structure for Board Committees.
- ii. **District Committees:** Wherever possible, committees should have two chairpersons (co-chairs) One would typically (though not always) be an administrator and the other should come from the largest bargaining unit represented on the committee. Chair structure can be modified by mutual agreement between the various association heads. Final approval of chair structure should come from the superintendent.

#### b. Chair/Co-chair Responsibilities: The role of the co-chairs is to keep the process organized, to ensure that it is moving on an appropriate timeline, to ensure that the work of the committee is being accomplished, and to ensure that the general principles of shared decision making, as described in this document, are being followed to the greatest extent practicable. Co-chairs should:

- i. Schedule meetings for a defined duration. (i.e. 60 to 90 minutes). If the committee finds that more than 60 to 90 minutes are regularly needed, it is recommended that the committee co-chairs pursue excused time ( $\frac{1}{2}$  day) during the school day to accomplish the committee work.
- ii. Co-chairs will make every attempt to accommodate parent/guardian/community members in scheduling meetings, including such things as varying the times of ad hoc committees and holding meetings in locations where video conferencing is available.
- iii. Scheduling meetings carefully. A central calendar listing all recurring or major meetings, including the need to consult with the TA President about scheduling meetings for Thursday afternoons, will be very useful to people trying to schedule new meetings. Once it's been created it should be used to schedule meetings. Multiple meetings should be scheduled out into the future so that committee members are able to plan for attendance.
- iv. Solicit input from committee members for each meeting agenda.
- v. Develop a uniform format for agenda and minutes of their meetings. Agendas should clearly indicate the key issues to be dealt with at each meeting such that anyone reading the agenda would be capable of providing input to a committee representative on those issues.
- vi. Publish an agenda such that it is available to staff, students and community members at least three (3) days before each meeting.
- vii. Ensure comprehensive minutes are recorded. Allow all committee members to take part in creation, review, and approval of the minutes through the use of Google docs. If the minutes are live, be sure all committee members agree that the minutes accurately reflect the meeting before the meeting ends. (If there are any concerns, consider taking the minutes offline until the questions are resolved.)
- viii. Ensure that when any feedback is requested from Building Councils the building principal and building president are contacted to be sure that this item is placed on the Building Council agenda.
- ix. Run an efficient and productive meeting that starts and ends on time.

- x. Provide members with mechanisms to work between meetings to accomplish committee goals.
  - xi. Make minutes of SDM Committee meetings available to the public. Minutes will include a statement identifying the stakeholder representatives, their respective constituency group and a notice that they may be contacted with questions or concerns.
  - xii. See attachment 2: Co-chair Checklist for a list of responsibilities for co-chairs.
  - xiii. In the case of Ad Hoc Committees, the chair(s) will ensure that the finished product called for in the charge (eg. a set of recommendations, a report, a group of candidates, etc.) is completed and submitted to the superintendent or the Board of Education in a timely fashion. The process of finalizing the product should include opportunities for all committee members to review and comment on proposed drafts of the final recommendations or report.
- c. **Committee Member Responsibilities:** It is important for committee members to remember that they are always on the committee to represent a broader group of stakeholders than themselves alone. Representatives serving on SDM committees will communicate either electronically or in person, with their constituents during the work of the committee and when the representative has to present a point of view to the committee as they seek consensus. Members who serve in multiple roles in the district should remain cognizant of which group they are representing in their seat on the committee. For example, if a district teacher who also is a parent in the district is serving in a parent position on a committee, their primary constituency for the purposes of providing communication and gathering feedback is the parent community. Committee members should:
- i. Provide input to the co-chairs for meeting agendas
  - ii. Solicit input from constituents (ideally for each meeting)
  - iii. Prepare for, attend and participate in each meeting
  - iv. Represent and reflect the issues and input of constituents
  - v. Communicate proposals of the committee to their constituency group in a timely manner.
  - vi. Gain feedback from constituents on topics and issues discussed
  - vii. Communicate (and, if necessary, explain) decisions of the committee
  - viii. Actively participate in the work of the group (thinking through solutions, creating documents, etc.)
  - ix. Be on time for meetings and have good attendance
  - x. Justify his/her opinion or perspective with relevant facts and logic.
  - xi. Respect the opinions and perspective of other members. Respect requires attention and thoughtfulness. It does not, however, require agreement. Lack of agreement should never be construed as lack of respect.
  - xii. Work to successfully implement the team's decision and to be available to explain the decision and its implications to stakeholders.
- d. **Responsibilities of All Constituents:**
- i. Read agendas
  - ii. Offer input to committee reps about agenda items
  - iii. Read committee minutes
  - iv. Discuss important issues with others
  - v. Consider joining a committee

#### D. **Appropriate Issues and Agenda Items for Shared Decision Making Groups**

##### a. **Persons responsible for setting agendas.**

- i. *Board-level Committees:* The school board has sole authority to determine the agenda of Board-level standing and ad hoc committees.
- ii. *District-level Ad Hoc Committees:* The superintendent typically creates the charge for district Ad Hoc Committees.
- iii. *District-Level Standing Committees:* Committee co-chairs work together, with input from committee members, to set the agenda for the meetings of district standing committees.

##### b. **Issues Outside of Shared Decision Making.** SDM committees should be aware that they would not have the authority, resources, jurisdiction, or the responsibility to make decisions concerning issues governed by negotiated contracts or federal, state and local law, regulations, codes or judicial rulings, or Board of Education policy.

##### c. **Important Questions.** In determining which topics or issues are appropriate for the shared decision making process, the following questions should be considered:

- i. Does the decision affect student development and/or educational performance in an entire building and/or multiple buildings?
- ii. Would the SDM committee have the resources available to implement the decision?
- iii. Would any or all members of the SDM committee have the authority to implement the decision?
- iv. Will the decision impact one building, several buildings, or the entire district?
- v. Is the topic or issue addressed governed by any of the negotiated contracts or Board of Education Policy?
- vi. Through consensus, would all members of the SDM committee accept responsibility for the decision?
- vii. Does this decision need multiple participants to assure effective and representative decision outcomes?

##### d. **Examples.** There are countless issues that may require and benefit from the attention of a shared decision making committee. A school board and/or administration is expected to work together with these committees to define what issues are appropriate for consideration. Some topics that have been discussed in shared decision making teams in this district in the past include:

- i. Capital Project/Bond Referendum
- ii. High School Academic Climate
- iii. Character Education/Bullying Prevention
- iv. After-School Programs
- v. Blended Learning
- vi. Full-Day Kindergarten
- vii. Elementary Report Card
- viii. District Student Management System selection

- ix. Technology Integration/Building Technology (Standing)
- x. Safety Plan Development
- xi. Participation on Hiring Committees for Teachers and Administrators
- xii. Elementary Math and Reading Curriculum Selection
- xiii. APPR for Teachers and Principals(Standing)
- xiv. Development of Professional Development Plan
- xv. Staff Development Opportunities (Standing)
- xvi. Health, Wellness, and Safety (Standing)
- xvii. Summer Curriculum Project Building Priorities
- xviii. Criteria for Application for Late Arrival and Early Dismissal
- xix. Student Recognition

In an ever-changing society, it is hard to anticipate all the issues that could affect our schools. The list above is offered to stimulate the thought process rather than to limit it. Committee co-chairs and individuals charging committees should consider the questions in paragraph II.D.c above when determining whether or not an issue is appropriate for the shared decision making process.

**E. Determining the Level at which topics/issues should be addressed in SDM committees.** When it has been determined that a topic or issue is subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making, the issue should be brought to the appropriate SDM committee. The following should help to determine the level at which topics/issues should be discussed:

- a. **Individual Building Level SDM** - It will be the responsibility of Building Councils to deal with issues that arise affecting curriculum, instruction, school climate and student development where those issues are limited to that specific building. EXAMPLES of issues/topics that may only impact one building include, but are not limited to, new courses (HS), homework policies, schedule changes/teaming (MS), particular playground and recess rules (single elem.building), disciplinary procedures in a particular building.
- b. **Multi-Building Level SDM (Three (3) Elementary Schools or MS/HS)**- Many issues require decisions that would have an effect on more than one building or department (or both). It is important that everyone working on such issues understands that decisions about those issues may impact groups or buildings in different ways. Examples of topics/issues that impact more than one building/department include, but are not limited to, Elementary Report Card, Elementary RTI, ELA/Math Elementary Curriculum, AAP schedule (impacts both MS & HS), Crossing Route 50- MS/HS Transition program, District Technology, Health and Safety, and many hiring committees. Leadership and communication are essential to help ensure that SDM practices are followed in these often complicated situations. The leaders of these groups must be clearly identified (district committee co-chairs, principals, K-12s, etc.). If there are no clear structures in place to provide leadership, the Superintendent shall charge the relevant Assistant Superintendent (or their designee) to take on a leadership role until the issue is resolved. **Multi-building SDM issue leaders have the responsibility to ensure that Building Councils and/or departments in the relevant schools are kept informed and input is gathered about the issues before the process moves forward.** This should take the form of items being added to Building Council and/or Department Meeting agendas for discussion and/or recommendations. When appropriate, standing items should be added to Building Council or



Department meeting agendas to facilitate this process. **It is imperative that the leader(s) both shepherd and document (via minutes) the flow of information from building/department to the centralized discussion on which a decision will be based.**

- c. **District-level SDM committees** - Some committees are the result of state-mandates or are formed by the Board of Education to consider changes to the district as a *whole*. Examples include: APPR, SDM, PD Plan and Bond Committees. Such committees should follow all relevant principles and procedures to the extent possible. It may be necessary to alter some specifics due to state requirements that trump the details specified in this document.

## F. **Dispute Resolution**

SDM committee decisions must be made within the constraints of Education Law, Board of Education Policy, Administrative Regulations, union contracts, and budgetary limits established by the Board of Education. Decisions are to be arrived at through consensus whenever possible. Consensus is reached when all participants agree that they understand something or some issue, can live with a decision, will support it and will communicate it. Every attempt will be made to reach consensus on issues.

Consensus decision making helps to ensure that every individual on the committee has involvement in a decision. It requires everyone's participation. Listening, thinking, studying, sharing, trust, and respect are values inherent in the process. All members must agree to support -- or at least not undermine -- a decision. Reaching consensus **does not** mean the vote is unanimous, the result is everyone's first choice, or everyone agrees. Consensus lends to the development of the commitment and ownership necessary in collaborative decision making. Said in another way, consensus is reached when all members agree with one of the following statements:

- "I strongly support this decision and I will be a leader."
- "I agree with this decision and I will give a lot of support."
- "I can live with this decision; I will be supportive."
- "I don't agree with this decision, but I will trust the opinion of the group."

If consensus is unattainable, other strategies will be employed. These strategies may include, but are not limited to: mediation, sending issues to a sub-committee for further work, problem-solving models, etc. If an impasse is reached, it can be resolved by a 75% vote of the total committee membership in support of a committee decision.

## **Glossary**

**Assessment** – A measurement or other systematic evaluation of the quality and range of student accomplishment.

**APPR** - Annual Professional Performance Review

**Consensus** – Consensus is reached when all participants agree that they understand something or some issue, can live with a decision, will support it, and will communicate it.

**New York State Learning Standards** – Levels or degree of expected student attainment, formalized at three levels (elementary, intermediate, commencement) by the state, across seven curricular areas: English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Languages Other Than English, The Arts, Career Development and Occupational Studies, and Physical Education, Health and Consumer Education.

**SBC** – School Building Council a school building based committee representing all stakeholders.

**SED** - State Education Department

**Shared Decision Making (SDM)** – “A process by which all members of the education community at the district and school levels cooperate in identifying educational issues, defining goals, formulating policy and implementing and assessing activities to help students reach standards of excellence” (*State Education Department, A New Lexicon, 1992*).

**Standards** –Statements of the level or degree of attainment students are expected to accomplish for a specified outcome as well as the methods used to assess that attainment.

**State Assessments** – Examinations required by New York State of all students to determine their academic achievement and that of the district toward the accomplishment of the New York State Standards.

# ATTACHMENT 1: MANDATORY CHECKLIST FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEES

Title of Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee charged by: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ District Standing Committee (on-going, e.g. Curriculum Committee)

\_\_\_\_\_ District Ad Hoc Committee (specific purpose, e.g. Bond Committee)

\_\_\_\_\_ State Mandated Committee (e.g., PD Plan Committee, SDM Plan Committee)

## MANDATORY CHECKLIST FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEES

An orientation process must be conducted (1) for committee members at the start of each school year for Standing Committees and (2) at the first meeting for an Ad Hoc Committee. Depending on the type of committee, the chair or the co-chairs will be responsible for the orientation.

The Orientation Process should be recorded in the minutes of the first meeting and include:

1. A discussion of the shared decision making culture in BH-BL including the history of Shared Decision Making
2. A discussion of the need for respect and equality among committee members
3. An explanation of the consensus model used in BH-BL (refer to page 8 in the Shared Decision Making Plan from 2018-20)
4. Review "Roles and Responsibilities" section of the plan (Section IV E) .
5. A discussion of the committee's charge.
6. Creation of a constituent group list for each member
7. Presentation by constituent representatives of their plan for communication with their constituent groups.
8. The creation of a preliminary Action Plan/Timeline.

At the end of the committee's work, all members of the committee attest that the following have occurred:

- Agendas were generated by co-chairs and sent to the Community at least three (3) days prior to all meetings.
- Minutes were created and approved by the committee and sent to the Community as soon as possible.
- Reps were given time to gather and digest information from constituents before decisions are made by the committee (i.e. issues should not be raised and decided upon during the same meeting).
- The committee evaluated the effectiveness of the shared decision making process during the committee timeline (halfway through the timeline at the very least). Such evaluations should be both announced on the agenda and recorded in the minutes.

X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_  
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X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_  
X \_\_\_\_\_

## ATTACHMENT II: CO-CHAIR CHECKLIST

Co-chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Co-chair: \_\_\_\_\_

### One-time tasks:

- Create “rolling agenda/minutes” document using Google Docs and share with all committee members and the district Communications Office prior to the first meeting.
- View SDM orientation video and then discuss following:
  - SDM history and culture at BH-BL.
  - Need for respect and equality among all committee members.
  - Explanation of the consensus model used in BH-BL (see SDM Guidelines, Section VII).
  - “Roles and Responsibilities” section of the plan (see SDM Guidelines, Section IV E) .
  - Committee's charge.
  - Creation of a constituent group list for each member.
  - Presentation by constituent representatives of their plan for communication with their constituent groups (i.e. How will parent representatives communicate with other parents?).
- Schedule all future meetings at the first meeting. Consult SDM Guidelines for information on planning your meeting schedule (days, times, length, etc.).

### Ongoing tasks for each meeting:

- Solicit committee members for input in creating an agenda.
- Share agenda with the community three (**3**) days prior to each meeting.
- Be prepared to run an efficient meeting that begins and ends on time.
- Create clear, concise and uniformly organized minutes. Verify with all committee members that minutes are accurate *prior to the end of the meeting*.
- Share minutes with the community within one (**1**) week following the meeting.
- Should your committee need specific feedback from Building Council, co-chairs must contact the principal and building president to be sure the item is placed on the Building Council agenda.
- Should your committee want to call special attention to an item in your agenda or minutes, contact the district Communications Office.
- Check in with members between meetings to ensure forward progress on committee goals.
- Monitor progress of each meeting and encourage all committee members to fulfill roles and responsibilities.