

Building Blocks of a Successful Site Council

1. Develop Site Council Purpose/Mission

When we are successful:

- All members will have a thorough understanding of state law and district policies related to site councils.

A site council works best when everyone understands its purpose and goals. The council's mission or purpose statement is a statement of the reason it exists. Whether you call it a mission or purpose, it represents the fundamental reason for the council's existence. What are we here to do together? A council that understands its mission can determine its goals more easily to set boundaries and to know what is and isn't within its jurisdiction. The mission statement is developed by team members based on state law and district policies. The site council mission is distinct from a school mission.

The primary duties of the Council are:

Involvement in and review of the progress made on the school's School Improvement Plan in furtherance of student achievement, including:

1. Review the vital signs in the Strategic Plan as they apply to the individual school.
2. Develop and coordinate plans for staff development needed to implement the School Improvement Plan in consultation with principal and staff.
3. Develop an effective, two-way communications plan with the school community around issues of school improvement and student achievement

2. Build Council Membership

When we are successful:

- Site council membership complies with Oregon Administrative Rules.
- Parents and community members on the council are representative of the diversity of the larger school community.

A site council is composed of representatives from the diversity of the school community including teachers, staff, parents, administration, and at times, students and community members.

3. Establish Operating Agreements

When we are successful:

- Meetings are organized, have clear agendas, and accomplish pre-established objectives in a timely manner.
- Members come prepared.
- Members have agreed on acceptable behavior and follow the agreements.
- The environment is welcoming.
- When members disagree, they try to see each other's point of view.
- Members feel free to question and disagree with each other.
- All members are treated as equals.

The site council should discuss and set group norms early on in its existence. Team agreements are the basic rules that a council establishes for working together. The rules or operating agreements cover procedural issues such as meeting schedules, minutes, and decision making as well as interpersonal communication issues.

4. Define Roles and Responsibilities

When we are successful:

- Site council roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and members understand them.

Teams operate more efficiently if group members know who is responsible for what issues and tasks. Most site councils identify a chair or co-chairs and a recorder or minutes taker. Other roles may include summarizer, process observer, and facilitator. In some cases the chair acts as the facilitator. In other cases, the roles are separated and held by two individuals.

5. Establish Decision Making Procedures

If we are successful:

- All viewpoints will be considered in making decisions.
- We agreed ahead of time how we will make decisions.
- Everybody's clear on when we have made a decision and what the decision is.

A site council should always be aware of the different ways it reaches decisions. Will the council use consensus decision making? How will they define consensus?

6. Develop an Annual Work Plan

When we are successful:

- We have an annual work plan which includes specific council goals, tasks, resources, timelines, and measures accountability.

An annual plan includes the specific measurable steps or the activities to which the council commits itself. Site councils generally facilitate the completion of the school profile and the school improvement plan, establish overall school goals, and determine staff development priorities for supporting the accomplishment of the goals.

7. Develop a Communication Plan

When we are successful:

- The site council gets input from its partners on priorities for the school.
- There is active two-way communication between the site council and its partners.

A council is only effective if it has buy-in from its key partners — staff, parents, students, and administration. Communication to and from partners is the key to obtaining buy-in. A specific plan should be established for communicating with key partners.