

## **#3 Establish Council Operating Agreements**

### ***What are council operating agreements?***

Council operating agreements are the basic rules members adopt about how they will conduct themselves. They may include procedural elements (e.g., start on time, etc.) as well as interpersonal (e.g. speak for yourself, let people finish, etc.). In addition, the team should clarify basic operating processes such as rotation of members, length of terms, meeting logistics, orientation, methods used to select members for the council, and any specific district parameters or expectations for councils. Many councils summarize this information in council by-laws.

### ***Why are they important?***

A primary concern of all team members should be to establish an atmosphere where all are free to express their opinions. In order to do this, it is critical for a council to reach consensus on its operating agreements. This helps develop norms that support the needs of the team members and the needs of the school. If a council agrees on its operating principles at the outset, you can avoid a lot of problems as teams deal with difficult decisions.

Operating agreements are best expressed as positive statements. For example: “Let people finish” instead of “Don’t interrupt.”

### ***When do you need them?***

Establishing the team agreements is one of the first things a council should do. Periodic re-evaluation is useful for a council when new members join, at the beginning of the school year, at mid-year or end-of-year for a self-assessment, or when group process appears to be breaking down. Team operating agreements are a living document, and can be added to and revised.

### ***How do you develop them?***

Use the attached worksheet to generate possible operating agreements.

# Agreements Worksheet

Attendance
Promptness
Meeting Place and Time
Participation
Listening/Speaking
Assignments
Decision-making
Minutes
Rotation of Routine Chores
Agenda Building
Other

## Site Council Agreements

### **The Big Valley High School Site Council Members Agree To:**

- Commit to consistent and timely attendance.
- Be honest, supportive, trustworthy, respectful and to value each other's opinions and positions.
- Focus on the situation, issue, or behavior, not the person.
- Not make decisions by default.
- Set an agenda, clearly state the desired meeting outcomes, and gatekeep time.
- Monitor their air time.
- Begin and end meetings on time.
- Evaluate regularly. Check meeting process and operating agreements periodically.
- Keep updated and accurate team minutes and records.
- Have each member responsible for informing another team member if he or she cannot attend a meeting and sending along with them any assigned homework tasks/information that the team needs to function as planned.

### **Our Site Council Members Agree To....**