

Building Consensus

Consensus decisions are useful for School Planning Councils because all members of the team agree to support the group's decision, even if the selected options is not their first preference.

Why build consensus?

- The process involves everyone and incorporates all ideas
- It generates commitment to action and to each other
- It helps teams work together in a positive way to develop mutual trust and understanding
- It helps identify areas of agreement
- It facilitates discussion
- It provides an opportunity to explore how each person felt about an issue – important information when designing an eventual action plan

Coming to consensus is usually dependent upon everyone in the group being satisfied that their concerns have been expressed and considered. Everyone has had “their say”. More time may be required for discussion, idea exploration, and consideration of all the options, however, decisions that are made will be supported by all members. The implementation of change (if applicable) will be much smoother than if members of the group oppose the solution/decision.

Consensus Building Activity

Each person needs a pen and an index card.

Topic statement:

Research states that family and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. *Invernizzi, Rosemary, Richards & Richards (1997), Dryfoos (2000), Clark (2002)*

Think

On your own, think about the topic statement and about ways to increase family and community involvement that is linked to student learning in your school. Write down your ideas.

Pair

Find a partner to share your ideas with and allow time for each partner to share. Discuss these ideas. Each pair comes to an agreement on one statement that satisfies each partner.

Pair again

Continue pairing up until there is one group and one agreed upon statement for the entire group.

You may wish to use this process when you are trying to reach consensus about an issue facing your SPC. Practice experience using a pre-selected topic such as the one above will assist your group in handling more challenging situations when they arise.