

1115 - DECENTRALIZED DECISION-MAKING

The School Board adopts a policy of decentralized decision-making, the primary focus of which shall be improved student achievement.

Definition/Philosophy

The Board defines decentralized decision-making as a process of empowering parents, teachers, school principals, and community members in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration with the authority and responsibility for decision-making at the local school level. The process involves the individuals responsible for implementing decisions in making those decisions. In general, decisions should be made at the level closest to the issue being addressed.

Decentralized decision-making is based on three (3) fundamental beliefs

- A. those most closely affected by decisions ought to play a significant role in making those decisions,
- B. the school is usually the most viable organization unit within which to make changes, and
- C. changes have a greater degree of being effective and long-lasting when carried out by people who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Commitment

In order for decentralized decision-making to be effective, it is important that the Board, administration, staff, and community make a commitment to

- A. a system-wide culture that supports norms of collegiality and collaboration with a demonstrated commitment to shared decision-making;
- B. professional development to acquire the skills needed for shared decision-making at the school level, and
- C. ongoing cross-school collaboration by administration and staff to support professional development, best instructional practices, and enhanced organizational learning.

District Mission, Vision, Strategic Plan, Policies, and Collective Bargaining Agreements

The District mission, vision, strategic plan, policies, collective bargaining agreements, beliefs, priorities, and policies shall continue to be established at the District level and approved by the Board. These establish the broad framework within which decisions can be made. The process for establishing the framework shall involve staff and the community. The collective bargaining agreements with the employee associations may also establish parameters for decision-making.

Role and Responsibility; School Plan for Implementation of Decentralized Decision-making

The Superintendent shall propose processes and procedures for Board approval for the implementation of decentralized decision-making to include a delineation of which responsibilities will remain at the central administration, which will remain with the school principal, and which will be made by a shared decision-making body at the school. School advisory councils shall continue to be the sole body responsible for final decision-making at the school relating to the implementation of school improvement and education accountability as prescribed by F.S. 1001.42(18) and 1008.345. The following are examples of subject matters that may be appropriate for school-level decision-making.

- A. development of educational priorities for the building, based on the District's priorities, while taking into account the specific needs of students,
- B. development of new programs to meet the unique needs of a school's student population;

- C development of scheduling to meet instructional objectives within the school day,
- D. allocation of the school's resources to best meet the needs of the students;
- E. determination of professional development programs to meet faculty needs, and
- F selection of supplemental instructional materials

The procedures shall also include procedures for monitoring and assessing effectiveness of decentralized decision-making in relation to meeting the curricular and instructional goals of the school. The Board, central administration, school principal, the school advisory council, and the decentralized decision-making body will share the responsibilities and accountability. The procedures shall provide for the development of a plan for implementation of decentralized decision-making. The plan shall be aligned to the school improvement plan. The plan shall be consistent with the Board's commitments under State and Federal statutes, regulations, State Board rules, court order(s), and other applicable law and policy. The Superintendent shall report to the Board in writing semi-annually with an update on the implementation of decentralized decision-making throughout the District, including any significant changes. One report shall be submitted along with the school improvement plans, and the other shall be submitted six (6) months thereafter.

Role of the School Principal

The school principal plays a pivotal role in improving school effectiveness.

Although many other members of the school community will be involved in making decisions, the school principal is the only one in a school building responsible for the whole school and will have the unique perspective and responsibility of seeing all aspects of the school. Just as the Superintendent must be the educational leader of the District, so the school principal must be the instructional leader of the school. School principals assume increased authority and responsibility under a system of decentralized decision-making.

School principals are provided greater discretion in determining budget priorities, establishing staffing patterns and developing educational programs to meet District wide goals.

Along with the increased authority for making decisions comes increased accountability, schools will be expected to develop specific educational objectives and instructional strategies for meeting District program goals and any State-mandated school improvement requirements.

Role of Others

While school principals will play a pivotal role in a system of decentralized decision-making, effective leadership is not the sole responsibility of the school principal. Under a system of decentralized decision-making others in the school community — including teachers, parents, students, and the business community — will participate in designing programs that will meet the school's educational objectives.

The Board expects teachers to be involved in educational decisions, including but not limited to, decisions about school climate, selection of materials, teaching methods and strategies, staff development and goal setting at the school level.

It shall be the school principal's responsibility to determine the level of staff involvement regarding educational decisions.

Other staff members will assume responsibilities for decisions about their work. Parents and other community members should play an active role in helping schools interpret and serve the needs of children.

The Superintendent is responsible for achieving District goals, communicating shared values, and building support for the schools throughout the entire community. The central administration will provide technical and professional support to the schools.

Finally, the Board will provide continuing support of the decentralized decision-making process to ensure its enduring success.

F S 1001.41(2), 1001.42(19), 1001.42(25), 1001.452(1)(a)

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