

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

Introduction

The Calgary Board of Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association have agreed on the following practices to be used in those situations where staff involvement in decision making is desired, or required by the terms of the collective agreement. At a minimum these practices should be employed in: staff deployment decisions at the school level, decisions impacting the activities of the three professional activity days and two organizational days provided in the collective agreement, and the extent of a school's involvement in extra-curricular activities. Though these principles and processes are expected to be employed in the preceding situations, they are recommended for use in any situation where staff input into decisions is contemplated.

Principles

We propose year round processes built upon the principles of the Working Relationship Commitment operating within the boundaries established by the School Act, the CBE/ATA Collective Agreement, the ATA Code of Professional Conduct and CBE Administrative Regulations.

Further, it is proposed that these processes be founded on the commitment of all employees to the following principles:

- Acknowledgement and recognition of roles, responsibilities and contributions
- Open and transparent communication
- Clear and understood decision making processes where voice is valued
- Ownership of the collective successes or failures of the organization
- Personalized lifelong learning

In addition, the commitment of all employees to following principles was also deemed important to this process:

- Flexibility
- Inclusiveness (of all staff)

Year Round Framework

The committee recognizes that the decisions requiring staff involvement occur throughout the year and not solely at one point in time. The table provided at the end of this document captures some of the monthly system, school and staff processes where staff input into decision-making is anticipated. This table should be used as a guideline to processes. Schools may certainly experience variations in timing.

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

Decision Specific Processes

Each of the following three sections is organized to present definitions, best practices and a resolution process. It should be noted that in all three areas due process is emphasized and encouraged rather than the substantive matter of the decision. It is expected that every effort will be made to build consensus for all these decisions. In this context “consensus” is defined as a condition of no active opposition to the decision. Majority vote or principal decision may be employed only when efforts to build consensus fail.

Professional Development and Organizational Days

Definitions

Professional Development Days (referred to in the Collective Agreement as Professional Activity Days):

A Professional Development Day is devoted to professional learning. Professional staff are engaged in furthering their understanding of current research and thinking regarding teaching and learning. Activities must be connected to best practices for student success, and will consider the CBE three-year plan, the school development plan and teachers’ professional needs.

Organizational Day:

An Organizational day is devoted to activities designed to address system, school, department/grade level or individual organizational needs.

Best Practices

A school calendar clearly identifying the three professional days and two organizational days provided for in the collective agreement for the subsequent school year must be published by the end of the current school year. The activities of these days are to be determined by the staff of each school.

It is preferable that a general plan for the upcoming year be agreed to prior to the end of the school year. Then, prior to the first of the scheduled professional development and organizational days in any school year, a plan for each of the three professional development days and the two organizational days must be completed following appropriate discussion. It is to be stressed that all staff have a responsibility to be actively engaged in planning these days.

In regards to Professional Development Days, the school staff may identify an individual or a Professional Development Committee to oversee the planning process, employing whatever method is appropriate to their site prior to present a proposed plan to the staff for consensus.

Emergent circumstances may persuade a staff to change this plan. Therefore, the year plan for professional development and organizational days should be viewed as being flexible to accommodate the changing needs of the staff at each school as the year unfolds.

It is expected that plans be determined by consensus among staff members, meaning there is no active opposition.

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

The Principal is responsible to ensure that activities fit the definition of Professional Development Day or Organization Day activities as described above.

Resolution Process

In the event consensus is not attained, those who are not in agreement with the proposed plan are to provide alternative solutions to be discussed. If an agreement cannot be met, the teachers and/or the principal may invite an ATA representative and HR Advisor to be involved in the conversation.

If a consensus is still not attained, the decisions shall be made by a majority of staff as determined by the staff. It may be advisable to establish what is considered a majority for such positions at the beginning of each school year. However, it should be emphasized that a majority vote should only be taken after several attempts at consensus have failed.

If any person believes that due process was not followed, then there is the option to file a grievance.

Extra-curricular

Definition

Extracurricular program:

This refers to those student activities that necessarily occur outside of classroom/instructional hours. These activities are generally open to all students at the school and may involve a selection process.

Best Practices

The staff should come to a consensus regarding the extent of the extra-curricular program at their school for the school year. This decision may be made in the spring or fall.

Resolution Process

In the event consensus is not attained, those who are not in agreement with the proposed plan are to provide alternative solutions to be discussed. If an agreement cannot be met, the teachers and/or the principal may invite an ATA representative and HR Advisor to be involved in the conversation.

If a consensus is still not attained, the decisions shall be made by a majority of staff as determined by the staff. It may be advisable to establish what is considered a majority for such positions at the beginning of each school year. However, it should be emphasized that a majority vote should only be taken after several attempts at consensus have failed.

This process is to be employed in determining the extent of the school's involvement in an extra-curricular program rather than for any individual choice of activity. Individual commitments may be volunteered for, or assigned within the context of assignable hours provisions of the collective agreement.

If any person believes that due process was not followed, then there is the option to file a grievance.

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

Staff Deployment

Definitions

Staff Deployment:

Staff deployment is the organizational method by which a school delivers its educational program based on student need. Factors that must be included in staff deployment decisions are workload of the certificated staff on site, timetable, amount of preparation time, supervision of students, and other professional duties.

In making the decision as to how the staff will be deployed, other documents, such as the *School Act*, the CBE Resource Allocation Method, the assignable time clause of the Collective Agreement, and CBE policies, must be taken into consideration. If uncertain of the impact of these documents on the deployment decisions to be made at the school level, the principal and staff should consult their HR Advisor and/or the ATA.

Deployment decisions should be ongoing throughout the year. They occur in response to changing resources and student needs, and the necessary balance between the two.

Best practices

There should be ongoing conversations and clear communication regarding deployment decisions throughout the school year. This is a process of engagement where administration and teaching staff have ongoing interaction. A complete and full sharing of deployment information is key to developing sound decisions that are understood and supported by all.

The principal and staff should use a variety of strategies to collect and share information. Effective communication is characterized by a variety of ongoing strategies: staff meetings, department or grade level conversations, surveys, "fireside chats," etc. The broader the strategy to gather and share information the more likely the decision will be data driven and therefore understood and supported.

Once all the pertinent information has been collected and shared there are also a variety of ways a decision can be made. It is expected that principals and staffs will seek to find consensus on these decisions employing whatever method is appropriate to their site.

The only time the principal shall take the position of authority and make the decision is where other attempts to reach an agreed upon decision fail.

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

Resolution Process

There are two distinct areas of staff deployment decisions; school organization and individual teaching assignment. In the former instance, it is appropriate for the entire staff to be involved in the decision. Individual assignment discussions will usually involve a discussion between one teacher and the principal, though if the teaching assignment of one teacher impacts others at the school it may be appropriate to involve all concerned. Resolution processes should focus on due process and best practice in both cases. The resolution process is not intended to change the outcome of a decision based solely on personal preference or desire.

Where there is a disagreement between the principal and the teaching staff regarding school organization decisions, the principal and teachers shall attempt to build consensus for the decision based on available data. When attempts to find consensus fail, the principal and staff may invite an ATA representative and HR Advisor to be involved in the conversation. When all attempts are unsuccessful, the principal shall take the position of authority and make the decision.

Where there is a disagreement between the principal and a teacher regarding teaching assignment decisions, the principal and the teachers shall meet and attempt to find a resolution. The teacher who is not in agreement with the proposed plan is to provide alternative solutions to be discussed. If an agreement cannot be met, the teacher and/or the principal may invite an ATA representative and HR Advisor to be involved in the conversation.

If any person believes that due process was not followed, then there is the option to file a grievance.

Conclusion

This agreement between the CBE and the ATA updates the 1994 agreement on staff deployment which included the use of a Staff Deployment Report Form that was to be signed by the principal and the school representative in June. Because this new agreement emphasizes principles and ongoing processes throughout the year, the Staff Deployment Form no longer performs a useful function and will be discontinued.

Rather than awaiting the end of the year to comment on what processes were used to make staff deployment decisions, it is now expected that these principles and processes will be in constant use as school administrators and teachers work through the many decisions a school year requires.

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

Month	System Activities and Processes	School Activities and Processes	Staff Activities and Processes
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring for open positions remaining after Spring Staffing and late resignations • RAM opens for changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals interview and recommend candidates • Principals welcome teachers new to the school • New students registered • Adjustments to teaching assignments are made • Staff return to school • School begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversations held regarding necessary changes to teaching assignments • Staff discussions regarding school organization or timetable changes
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final count of students • Hiring continues • Last day to declare teachers surplus to need • RAM change request close 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible new hires or surplussing of staff excess to need • In extreme situations a full reorganization of the school is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where surplussing is necessary, conversations with staff take place. Where a full reorganization is required conversations with staff as a whole are also required
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAM opens for final adjustments for approximately one week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus eligible student submission deadline 	
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System calendar for next year finalized 		
December			
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sr. High RAM reopens for second semester adjustments • Hiring of probationary contract teachers for the upcoming year begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sr High reorganizations with respect to student demographic changes and/or funding adjustments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment discussions begin

Staff Involvement in School Decisions

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February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sr High RAM closes • Student projections for the next year • Budget building for the next school year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School administration begins prelim plans for next year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff requested to indicate plans for the following year
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget preparation continues • PIF applications and approvals • Teachers declare return to work from leave • Teachers apply for General Leave for ensuing year • Deadline for arranging job shares 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School calendar for the upcoming year • Ongoing decisions regarding the extent of the extra-curricular program for next year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal and staff involvement in the decision as to allocation of the three professional activity days and two organizational days flowing from the collective agreement • Principal and staff initiate plans for these five days by the end of June • Principal and staff engage in decision-making processes regarding extent of extra-curricular program
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAM allocations for the upcoming year • Teacher Staffing focuses on balancing system projection • Probationary teacher evaluations are due. • Support staff job share deadline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School administration make allocation decisions according to RAM • Declarations of staff surplus to need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff apprised of RAM allocations and decisions • Where RAM decisions impact school organization (eg Teacher librarian or no) staff involved in the decision • Where appropriate, staff are provided opportunities to volunteer to be declared surplus

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Month	System Activities and Processes	School Activities and Processes	Staff Activities and Processes
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers returning from leave, declared surplus or otherwise requiring placement are placed at school locations • Open round of postings begins • Deadline for resignation May 31 • RAM reconciliation workshops • RAM closes until August 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prelim timetable creation • Principal welcomes teachers placed at their school • Principal interviews and selects candidates for open postings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers on continuous contracts at their school for at least two years can participate in open round of postings • Major changes to school organization and timetable are approved through staff deployment decision-making processes. • Once RAM decisions are finalized, teacher assignment conversations take place
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open round of postings ends • Remaining open positions filled from unassigned teachers and next year's probationaries • Submission of remaining teacher evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize timetable • Principal interviews and selection of candidates continues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher assignments finalized using staff deployment decision-making processes • Plans for the following year for pd and org days completed
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System staffing continues 	Hiring continues	

Ongoing processes:

- Leaves, retirements, resignations continue throughout the year and may impact deployment decisions.