

School-Based Decisions/School Improvement Teams

Board Policy: A-30
Adopted: June 8, 1998
Revised: May 14, 2007

I. General Policy Statement

School-based decision making is mandated by Senate Bill 1139 for all North Carolina public schools with the primary goal of improving student performance. The School Improvement (Strategic) Plan (SIP) shall be the primary vehicle for shifting authority to schools and for making decisions related to student performance. This policy is intended to address the legal implications of school-based management, local practice and philosophy, and the requirements of G.S. 115C-105.20-.38 and G.S. 115C-301.1. The Board has the authority to approve the school plan(s) and has the authority at any time to vacate any portion of a school improvement plan that is unlawful or impedes student performance.

II. School Improvement Team

By law the school improvement team is composed of the principal, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, teacher assistants, and parents of children enrolled in the school. The parents on the school improvement team must reflect the racial and socio-economic composition of the students enrolled in the school and can not be members of the building-level staff. School improvement team meetings must be held at a convenient time to assure substantial parental participation.

- A. Open Meetings Law - The school improvement team is a "public body" in regard to the open meetings law. All official meetings must be open to the public. A notice of the meetings shall be provided and full and accurate minutes of the meetings shall be kept.
- B. Selection of Members - Representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants shall be elected by their respective groups by secret ballot. Parents shall be elected by parents of children enrolled in the school in an election conducted by the parent and teacher organization of the school. If none exist then by the largest organization of parents formed for this purpose.
- C. Accountability of Team Members - The school improvement team will identify a leader (chairperson) for the group. The principal shall present the proposed "plan" to all assistant principals, instructional personnel, and instructional support personnel teacher assistants assigned to the school for their review and vote. The vote shall be by secret ballot. The principal shall present the plan to the Board upon approval of a majority of the school staff. The principal and members of the "team" will be held accountable to standards of professional conduct and for meeting Board policies and legal requirements.

III. School Improvement Plans

The school improvement plan will be the primary vehicle through which the Board will approve or

reject an individual school site-based decisions. These plans will address State performance standards and requirements and also address system and school reform initiatives. The local school improvement team has the authority to amend the approved "plan" as often as is necessary and appropriate. The superintendent or designee will review the amendments to determine the effect on student performance, determine if lawful and then submit to the Board for approval. A school improvement plan will remain in effect for three years.

IV. Local School Reform Initiatives

The Board believes that the chief function of public school education is to provide its students with a foundation for life-long learning and to enable them to participate as responsible citizens in a rapidly changing world. The Board believes that a successful education program depends on innovation at the individual school level and commits itself to allowing schools to develop and implement approved plans which ensure the educational success of their students. The success of the school improvement plan will be measured on specific performance standards established by the State Board. The following issues may be addressed in an individual school's improvement plan.

A. Curriculum

Curriculum development must be an ongoing process if the curriculum is to address the changing needs and diversity of all students. The North Carolina Standard Course of Study provides the foundation for local curriculum development. Curriculum modifications may be considered by each school. These modifications shall be reviewed by central office staff before they are recommended to the Board. These proposals must be approved by the Board as part of the school improvement plan process. Before a school initiates a pilot program, staff, parent, and community must be informed and be provided the opportunity for input. Board approval is required prior to implementation.

B. Budget Flexibility

The Board shall allocate state and local PRC 61 funds in a lump sum and provide maximum flexibility to the school in its allocation. Schools shall budget their financial resources to support their programs. Requests to transfer funds from other funding allotment categories shall be included as part of the school improvement plan. The Board delegates the responsibility to professional staff to select appropriate resources to meet curriculum needs. (See Policy C-6)

C. Staff Development

By law, 75% of PRC 28 staff development funds shall be allocated to the individual schools. Currently, 100% of PRC 28 staff development funds are allocated to the schools. If Title I or Title II program funds are available, these funds can assist schools with staff development if the staff development plan meets federal requirements. Each school is required to identify how staff development funds will be spent through its school improvement plan.

D. Calendar - Time for Learning

The Board believes that the school year and the school day need to be planned to facilitate maximum student learning. The Board is charged with developing a calendar for the school system. (See Policy SA-11) The calendar shall provide for a minimum of 180 days of instruction and each school shall provide a minimum of 1,000 hours per year of instructional time. An alternate calendar may be proposed by an individual school following state guidelines. Proposals for an alternate calendar shall include input from all relevant constituencies within a school's attendance area. Any proposal for an alternative calendar shall be included as part of the school improvement plan and must be approved by the Board.

E. Student Placement/Promotion (Progression)

The Board believes that students should progress to the next level of study only after they demonstrate their proficiency in knowledge and application of the current level of curriculum. The Board has established standards and processes for the next level of study. (See Board policies A-5, C-4, SA-11, and SA-13) Students who are having difficulty in meeting the standards must be identified so that appropriate intervention can be provided. Appropriate remediation strategies must be identified and delineated within the school improvement plan.

F. Personnel

The following personnel issues are practices that allow decisions by each local school site.

- Recommendations for hiring, retention, and dismissal
(See Policy P-19)
- Placement of personnel (See G.S. 115C-288)
- Assignment of duties (See G.S. 115C-288)
- Evaluation of personnel (See Policy P-17)

G. Moment of Silence

The incorporation of a moment of silence within the school day is a school site decision and may be included in the school improvement plan.

H. Schedules

The principal has the authority to schedule duties and responsibilities requiring employees to remain outside the regular school day whenever the assignment is necessary for the efficient operation of the school. The principal will grant compensatory time depending on the status of the employee – salaried/hourly. Hourly Employees may accrue no more than 40 hours of compensatory time and this time must be taken by the end of the work year (June 30). Principals may also request Board approval of flex schedules for employees during student days, workdays – especially conference days, and during the summer. (See Policy P-1 – Hours of Personnel)

I. Safe School Plans

The school improvement plan shall include a plan to address school safety and discipline.

J. Planning Time and Duty-Free Lunch

Each school's Improvement Plan shall attempt to provide full-time assigned classroom teachers with duty-free instructional planning time during regular student contact hours with the goal of providing an average of at least 5 hours per week. The plan shall also attempt to provide a duty-free lunch period on a daily basis to all teachers or as otherwise approved by the school improvement team. The following factors must be considered in developing the plan to the maximum extent possible: (1) safety and proper supervision of students, (2) funding provided by the General Assembly, and (3) a fair distribution of time to all full-time teachers.

The General Assembly and School Board recognizes the safety and well being of students and a lack of state funding may limit the ability of a school to fully achieve the goal of 5-hours of planning time per week and a duty-free lunch period on a daily basis.

Legal References: (G.S. 115C-105.20,.25,.26,.27,.35 and 115C-301.1)