

NORTH MERRICK UFSD

**PLAN FOR PARTICIPATION  
in  
SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING  
and  
SHARED DECISION MAKING**



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## ASSURANCE FROM DISTRICT PLANNING COMMITTEE

### North Merrick Union Free School District

#### PLAN FOR PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING AND SHARED DECISION MAKING

##### *Introduction*

Pursuant to the Commissioner's Regulations Part 100.11, the following plan for participation in school-based planning and shared decision making in the North Merrick U.F.S.D. is based upon the knowledge that the teachers, parents, and administrators of North Merrick have unique strengths. Representatives from each of these groups share these attributes and, therefore, will form a school-based team committed to working together to improve the educational performance of all children in the North Merrick Schools. To this end, the *District Planning Committee* acknowledges that:

- North Merrick teachers are conscientious professionals committed to students, learning, and the search for new methods of teaching to continue to improve curriculum and instruction in the District;
- North Merrick parents are dedicated members of the school community who have an understanding of the school's history, a keen concern for the welfare of the students, and the prestigious position of being their children's first teachers. They continue to serve as advocates and supporters of improved and enriched programs for all children;
- North Merrick administrators are child advocates who are knowledgeable educational leaders with proven abilities as facilitators, problem solvers, and promoters of excellence in our schools.

The *District Planning Committee* also acknowledges the creative energies, the hard work, and the allegiance that the members of each group have demonstrated to the educational progress of the North Merrick Schools.

*(1) The educational issues, which will be subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making at the building level by teachers, parents and administrators, are as follows:*

- a. Continued Education:** identify and recommend staff and parent continued educational needs

**b. Communication:** maintain and enhance methods of communication between home and school for better understanding and increased involvement

**c. School Climate:** maintain and enhance school climate by planning activities which foster school spirit, cohesiveness, and unity of purpose

**d. Curriculum and Instruction:** enrich curriculum and instruction through development of special programs, projects, and activities

**e. School Budget:** identify school budget needs

**f. Health and safety:** develop and recommend health and safety procedures

*(2) The manner and extent of the expected involvement of all parties:*

**a. Membership**

Each school-based team should consist of:

Principal

2 Teachers (one general education and one special education or special area teacher)

2 Parents (SEPTA, PTA – preferably one from each)

1 CSEA Representative

The District Committee will review representation after two years to determine the effectiveness of this configuration.

**b. Member Selection Procedures**

School-based team representatives will be selected by their constituencies for one-year terms, extending from June to June. Each member will have the option to serve for an additional year. Subsequent one-year terms may be served if the individual representative's constituency selects the member.

Each group represented on the school-based team will determine the process of selection that best meets the needs of the group.

Parent representatives from PTA and SEPTA are to be selected from parents who have a child attending the school. In addition, the SEPTA unit, in its selection process of the SEPTA representatives, will select a member for each school-based team who will be a SEPTA representative as well as a member of the building PTA.

An employee who is also a parent of a child in the building will not be permitted to serve on the school-based team.

The constituency will select a replacement for a representative who cannot continue to attend meetings.

### **c. Roles and Responsibilities**

Prior to selection, each constituency will discuss the role and responsibility of the representative. The representative will be expected to:

- gather data (research);
- inform the constituency of the team's work, and obtain feedback which describes different points of view;
- objectively review and analyze data to develop plans and make decisions.

It is understood that the representative selected is to adhere to the role of representative and serve as such rather than presenting his/her own agenda. It is the responsibility of each representative to approach the issues with an open mind, and to seek solutions for the betterment of all children.

Responsibility of a group member is synonymous with individual accountability. For consensus to work, each team member must be committed to the following behaviors that build trust and respect:

1. Acknowledge individual contributions
2. Discuss feelings honestly
3. Treat ideas with respect
4. Question, respond, inform
5. Listen without prejudice
6. Share group decisions – not individual opinions of constituents
7. Minimize rumors and misconceptions by clarifying with facts
8. Confront conflicts; work through differences
9. Support final decisions of the group

*(Various activities to elicit individual abilities will be used during the school-based team training.)*

Attendance is important for teamwork. It is, therefore, the responsibility of a member who may be absent to read the minutes, and to contact another team member for a summary of the meeting, assignments, and future agenda items, so that she/he will be prepared for the next meeting.

#### **d. Meetings**

A minimum of three meetings is to be scheduled during the year. School-based teams will determine the time, place, and the need for additional meetings. Scheduling will be subject to the availability of the building Principal. Meetings of the school-based team will not interfere with instructional time. Substitute coverage will not be provided.

#### **e. Operational Procedures**

##### Process of Shared Decision Making

Consensus will be used as the method of decision making by the school-based team. A review of the literature will be a component in the development of a plan, or for the determination of a decision.

To reach consensus the team will employ a variety of techniques in the preliminary stages of the process to elicit ideas, prioritize and/or focus on suggestions. Noted below, and further described in *Attachment "A,"* are several strategies which each school-based team will be trained to use as part of the consensus building process:

- Brainstorming
- Plus Minus Interesting
- Pyramiding
- Nominal Group Process
- Group Check

##### Conditions of Committee Work

It is understood that in order for team planning and decision making to be productive and gain acceptance by the entire school community, the school-based team must devote time to research and deliberations. Committee members who remain enthusiastic about their involvement engender the same excitement for new ideas in the constituencies they represent. Therefore, the following elements have been identified as crucial for committee satisfaction:

- Each member's input is received and is viewed as being important to the success of the group.
- The team should identify tasks, and then form sub-groups and/or ad hoc committees, and monitor proper time management and facilitation.

- Modifications and adjustments are an integral part of the process. Closure is based on ongoing refinements.
- Decisions are readily accepted and viewed as applicable and productive for all.
- Schoolwide successes are celebrated.

### Ongoing Involvement

Collaborative activities of teachers, parents, and administrators have been longstanding in North Merrick. *Attachment "B"* contains examples of activities that have promoted a spirit of community, and have enhanced the academic, social and emotional development of our children. In addition to the work of the school-based team and respective ad hoc committees, these joint efforts will be continued.

**(3) *The standards and means by which all parties shall evaluate improvement in student achievement:***

#### **a. Standards**

The New York State Learning Standards, correlated with the District's Vision, Mission and Goals, direct the school-based team's planning and decision-making.

#### **b. Means**

Means are defined as indicators of students' successes. Data will be gathered informally or formally.

**(4) *The means by which all parties will be held accountable for the decisions which they share in making:***

#### **a. Agenda Setting**

Team members will brainstorm topics for discussion in order to establish agendas for the year. The team will determine the strengths of its building, as well as areas for possible attention. Information gathering techniques, i.e. surveys, interviews, data review, etc., may be used. Team members will present the first draft of the agenda to each member of their group and report the group's suggestions to the team. The members will come to consensus regarding the area(s) that the team will address.

#### **b. Minutes**

Minutes will be taken at each meeting. The responsibility for recording the minutes will rotate among team members. Minutes will be distributed to: team

members, the Superintendent, the Board of Education, other building principals, and a copy will also be filed in a central location in each building for availability to any member of the school community.

### **c. Reports to Other Groups**

Representatives are responsible for apprising their respective groups regarding the issues under discussion, and the activities in progress. In turn, they will report any input from their constituencies.

### **d. Assessment**

Each school community will determine the effectiveness of the team's functioning by obtaining feedback from their constituencies. In addition, the school-based team will develop a self-evaluation process to assess the interaction among its members.

### ***(5) The process whereby disputes presented by the participating parties about the educational issues being decided upon would be resolved at the local level:***

When the school-based team is presented with an issue, it will follow the procedures noted below:

1. Question the parameters of the topic, and ask whether the issue falls within the purview of the school team, by posing the following questions:

- a) Does this violate State mandates or the Commissioner's regulations?
- b) Is this a Board policy issue?
- c) Is this an administrative decision?
- d) Is this a parental prerogative?

2. If the issue does not conflict with any of the above, then it is the decision of the school-based team to resolve it by either continuing to discuss the issue until consensus is reached or to table it for a later date.

### ***(6) The manner in which State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision making will be coordinated and met by the overall plans:***

The intent of this regulation is to further involve parents with the education of their children. This plan enhances the existing structures, committees, and advisory groups in which parents have traditionally been involved in the North Merrick Schools.



Parental involvement, guaranteed by State and Federal regulations regarding Special Education, Title I, and PSEN, will be maintained.

*Attachment A*

## **CONSENSUS BUILDING STRATEGIES**

### **Brainstorming**

The goal of brainstorming is to produce multiple possible solutions. As a thought comes to mind, a person calls it out. Without discussion, ideas are rapidly listed in a short period of time. The purpose is to generate as many ideas as possible. Each idea may trigger another one from another individual. It opens the mind to a variety of options and solutions.

### **PMI: Plus, Minus and Interesting**

#### **The Handling of Ideas**

P=Plus	The good things about an idea - why you like it
M=Minus	The bad things about an idea - why you don't like it
I=Interesting	What you find interesting about an idea

Rather than just saying you like an idea, or don't like it, you can use a PMI. When you use a PMI, you give the good points, the bad points, and then the points that are neither good nor bad, but are interesting. You can use a PMI as a way of processing ideas, suggestions and proposals.

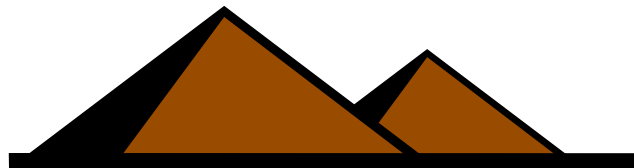
#### **Why use a PMI?**

Without the PMI you may reject ideas that seem bad at first sight. Frequently judgments are based not on the value of the idea itself, but on your emotions at that time. You are very unlikely to see the disadvantages of an idea that you like very much.

The interesting points may lead to other ideas.

With a PMI you decide whether or not you like the idea after you have explored it, instead of before.

### Pyramiding



1. Pairs: Each individual shares his/her response. The pair decides on one answer that both parties can live with.
2. Foursome: Each pair shares its responses. The foursome decides on one answer they can live with.
3. Sixteens: Each group of four shares its response. The larger group decides on one answer that the group can live with.
4. Whole group

### Nominal Group Process

Nominal Group Process (NGP) is a tool to use for arriving at creative decisions.

1. Each team member writes down his or her own ideas about a problem solution (independently of each other).
2. Solutions are shared with the whole team in a round-robin manner. The team recorder writes all ideas on the board or chart paper, trying to capture exact wording. The ideas are not evaluated.
3. Questions and comments to clarify the solution suggested are heard.
4. Each individual, working independently, now rank-orders each idea.

5. Priorities are established by pooling the rankings.

Advantages:

- All members of the team are able to express ideas.
- Helps identify areas of divergent opinions and values.
- Can be used to identify and rank problems or solutions.
- Encourages participation of every member of the team.

*Attachment A*

*The Group Checkpoint*

The group checkpoint is based on the two assumptions—that all participants have significant value to contribute, and a major purpose of the group’s procedures is to maximize their contributions.

In the thick of a meeting, however, it is easy for the more outgoing or impassioned participants to dominate the discussion. Many others, who could contribute important considerations, remain silent, making it difficult for the group to sense its collective judgment. It is important for the group to stop its proceedings periodically, and quickly learn all the participants’ thoughts and values on the topic under discussion.

This group checkpoint process begins when someone wants to know what others think about an idea or proposal. After the point under discussion is clarified, each member of the group is asked, in turn, to share his or her views within a two-minute time limit. During this sharing period, participants should avoid interruptions, and hold their reactions and comments until all have had an opportunity to express their views.

Guidelines

1. A member calls for group survey.
  2. The idea or proposal is restated to assure that it is clearly understood.
  3. Each person presents his or her thoughts – without group discussion. If a point is inaudible or unclear, other members may ask for clarification.
  4. A time limit should be set for each person – the maximum is usually two minutes.
1. A checkpoint is completed, group discussion follows, and perhaps a collective decision is made.

The purpose of the discussion, which follows the checkpoint process, is to identify the similarities and differences of members’ thoughts, and decide the next best steps. Sometimes this procedure uncovers latent conflicts which are important to explore

further. In many cases, the procedure leads easily into a consensus decision.

*Attachment A*

### DECISION BY CONSENSUS

- 1) Allows all voices to be heard, information shared, and feelings expressed.
- 2) All members of the team have explicitly stated that even if they do not favor the decision, they can allow it to stand, and will not deliberately work against its success.
- 3) Team members view the decision as a fair one, and, therefore, are willing to support it.

## *Attachment B*

### **EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. Building Involvement**

##### *A. Continued Education*

###### Activities

###### Participating Groups

In-service	Teachers/ Administrators/ Parents
Conferences	Teachers/ Administrators/ Parents
Graduate Courses	Teachers/ Administrators
Partners in Education	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Lending Library - Parent Education	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Parent Workshops	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Nassau PTA Fall & Spring Conference	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators

##### *B. Communications*

Faculty Meetings, Grade Level Meetings, Learning Team Meetings	Teachers / Administrators
Report Card Conferences	Parents/ Teachers
School Board Presentation	Teachers/ Administrators
PTA Meetings	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
PTA Council	Parents/ Administrators
News Articles	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
New Parent/ Kindergarten Teas	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Meet the Candidates	Parents
Community Open House	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Legislative Breakfast	Parents/ Teachers/ Administrators
Student Newspapers	Students/ Teachers

Newsletters

Parents/Teachers/ Administrators

*Attachment B*

*C. School Climate*

Activities

Participating Groups

Fun Day	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Boutique	Parents
Teachers' Recognition Day	Parents
School Pictures, Plant Sales,	Parents
Student Council	Students/Teachers/ Administrators
Class Captains	Parents
Sixth Grade Activities	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Emergency Plans	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Holiday Celebrations	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Gifts - Awards	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators

*D. Curriculum & Instruction through Special Programs,  
Projects and Enrichment*

Contests/Reflections	Teachers/ Administrators/Parents
Class Trips	Students/Teachers/Parents
Readers	Parents
Fund Raisers	Parents
PARP	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Cultural Arts	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators
Book Fair	Parents
Grant Writing	Parents/ Administrators

*E. Budget*

Budget Advisory Committee	Parents/Teachers/ Administrators/CSEA
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**II. District Involvement**

Curriculum Advisory Committee  
Health Committee  
Compact for Learning  
CSE/CPSE  
Principal Selection

Teachers/ Administrators  
Parents/ Administrators  
Parents/Teachers/ Administrators  
Parents/Teachers/ Administrators  
Parents/Teachers/ Administrators