

# DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES

FACULTY TEAMS THAT REACH CONSENSUS



Developed from the Contents of  
Reginald Leon Green's

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Practicing the Art of Leadership: A  
Problem-based Approach to  
Implementing the ISLLC Standards

Chapter 5

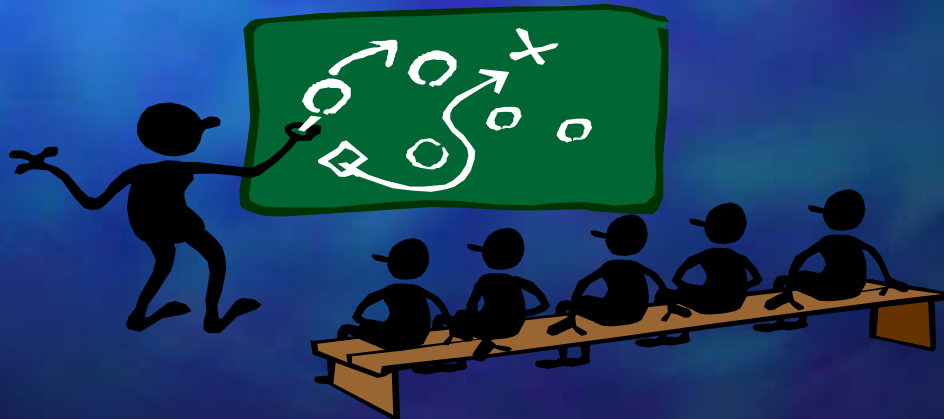
# Decision-Making Strategies

- Leaders of learning organizations are skilled in determining decisions that must be made with the involvement of members of the faculty.



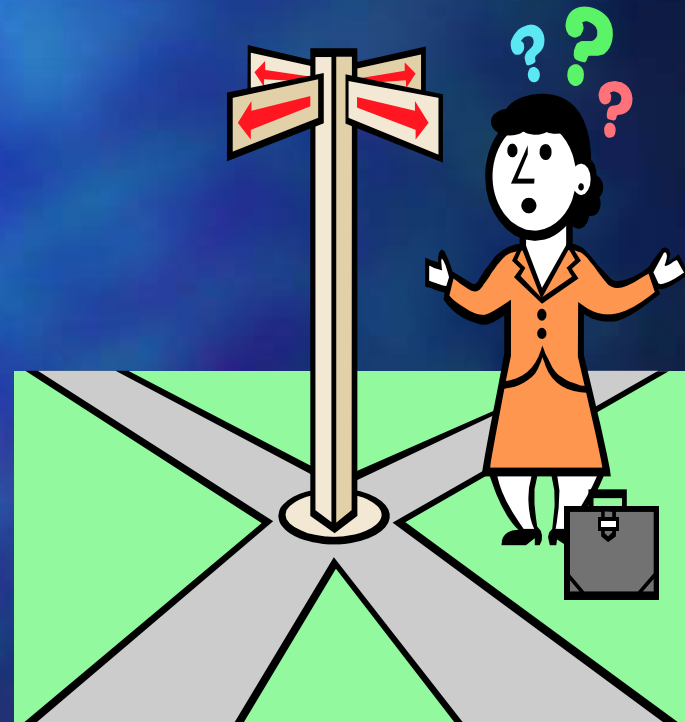
# Decision-Making Strategies

- This module presents strategies that can be used by school leaders to effectively involve faculty members in the decision-making process.



# The Art of Decision Making

- Decision making is a skill that must be mastered.



# The Art of Decision Making

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- There are at least three ways in which school leaders make group decisions:

Autocratic

Democratic

Group  
Consensus

# Autocratic Group Decisions

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- Decisions that are made for the group by the leader are known as autocratic decisions and are likely to produce winners and losers.
- Quick decision making is an advantage of this process.

# Democratic Decision Making

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- Democratic decision making is a slow and cumbersome process. However, it works well for very large groups, like a school faculty.
- With this process, there are also winners and losers.

# Decision Making by Consensus

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- *Consensus* is another form of group decision making. It is difficult to master; however, in terms of acceptance and implementation of decisions made, it is the most rewarding.
- This method works very well for small group problem-solving.

# Group Decision Making

- In a Learning Organization:



- The final decision does not produce winners or losers; everyone wins.
- All participants own the final decision and willingly assist in its implementation.

# Group Decision Making

- In a Learning Organization:



- A positive atmosphere promotes a level of trust and understanding among faculty members.
- Disagreement is not considered a barrier to reaching final agreement.

# Group Decision Making

- In a Learning Organization:



- Brainstorming techniques are used to generate possible solutions without value judgments being made as to the merit of suggested solutions.

# Group Decision-making Strategies

- Keep the goal foremost in mind.
- Seek group consensus.



# Group Decision-making Strategies

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- Move discussions to higher levels of generality (general ideas unite and specific ideas divide).
- Keep the group considering the issues, asking why, and seeking common ground.

# Group Decision-making Strategies

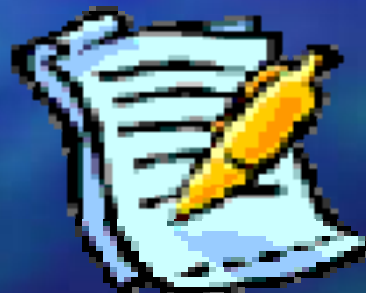
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- Focus the group on collecting ideas and placing them into categories.
- Have the group establish some criteria by which discussions are conducted.

# Group Decision-making Strategies

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- If the group is having difficulty, stop the discussion and have the members reflect independently by writing down their concerns or ideas about what is happening.



# Seeking Group Consensus



# Seeking Group Consensus

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- To move non-supporters toward consensus, the school leaders should ask questions such as:
  - Under what conditions would you support this solution?
  - What part of the solution do you oppose?
  - What parts of the solution would you modify so you would be more comfortable with the solution?

# Seeking Group Consensus

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- More questions:
  - What would be necessary for you to agree with this solution?
  - Would you be willing to live with the solution for a limited time?
  - What would be a reasonable time before we reassess the decision?
  - Under what conditions would you be willing to put aside your differences?

# Seeking Group Consensus

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- Questions to ask team members who support the solution:
  - What are you willing to do to adjust your views to respond to the discomfort of those who are not yet in agreement?
  - If you were not in agreement, what parts of the solution might be troublesome to you?

# Seeking Group Consensus

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- One Caution: Individuals who feel as if they haven't been heard can become uncomfortable by being singled out for this kind of attention. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to that issue as well.
  - Honoring all voices crucial in consensus. *Tools for Schools (NSDC Newsletter)*. October/November 1997, p. 8.

# When There Is No Consensus

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- When there is no consensus, try these suggestions from the the NSDC's *School Improvement Planning Manual*:
  - Create a compromise position and ask everyone to react to that.
  - Provide private "think time" and begin the discussion again.

# When There Is No Consensus

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- Leave the issue and return to it later;
- Organize small groups to reach consensus and then begin large group discussion again;
- Create a contradictory statement to refocus the discussion and identify real concerns, and/or
- Choose another facilitator.

# Knowing When Consensus Is Reached

- The Consensus Criteria:
  - Individuals acknowledge that they believe that their point of view is understood.



# Knowing When Consensus Is Reached

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- The Consensus Criteria:
  - Dissenting individuals agree to support the idea and acknowledge that it was reached openly and fairly.

William Ouchi, Theory Z

# A Decision-Making Feedback Strategy

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Plus and Minus  
(+ and -)

# Feedback Strategies

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- Prepare two sheets of newsprint paper.
- Label one with a + and the other a -.

# Feedback Strategies

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- Have participants write a critique of the process on sticky notes without identifying themselves.



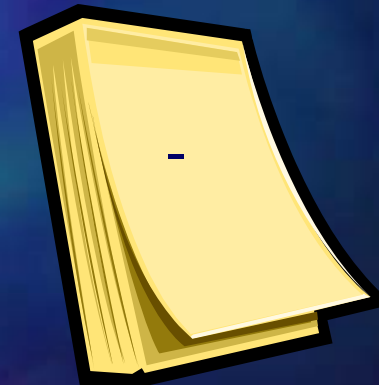
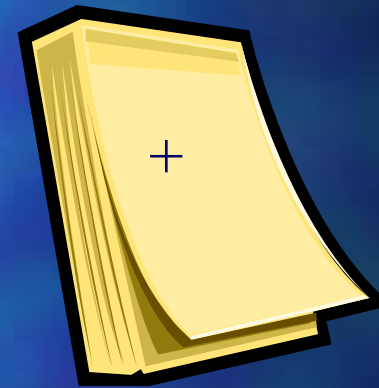
# Feedback Strategies

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- Participants should first write down what they liked about the session and then what they would change.

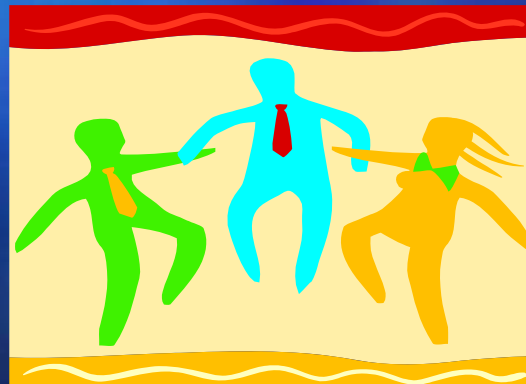
# Feedback Strategies

- Have them place “what they liked about the session” on the Plus paper and then “what they would change” on the Minus paper.



# Group Decisions

- The group decision-making process holds many advantages. Groups tend to generate more ideas and make higher quality decisions.



# Group Decisions



- Working with others often causes members to perform better; they receive support and encouragement and tend to look at alternatives more thoroughly.

# Group Decisions

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- They acquire a greater understanding of the issues and take ownership of the decision, realizing they will have to live with the outcomes.

# References

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- Honoring all voices crucial in consensus. October/November, 1997 *Tools for Schools (NSDC Newsletter)*, p. 8.
- Ouchi, William, (1993). *Theory Z: How American Business Can Meet the Japanese Challenge*. New York: Avon Books.

# Internet Resources for Consensus Building

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- Using Consensus for Decision-Making
  - <http://www.sna.com/switp/consen.html>
- Consensus Decision Making
  - <http://www.wolfenet.com/~marymc/consensus.htm>
- Consensus Process
  - <http://www.activism.net/peace/nvcdh/consensus.htm>

# Internet Resources for Consensus Building

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- Consensus Decision Making
  - <http://www.web.net/~lrobinso/lconsens.html>
- Consensus Decision Making
  - <http://www.globenet.org/horizon-local/consent.html>
- THE FACILITATOR TOOLBOX: "How do I get groups unstuck?"
  - <http://www.dragonfire.net/~EOE/FacilitatorToolbox.htm>

# Internet Resources for Consensus Building

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- Consensus: A Mini-Guide by Mark Shepard
  - <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/iasweb/catsweb/rarebook/consent.htm>
- Consensus Decision Making
  - <http://www.actupny.org/documents/CDdocuments/Consensus.html>

# Internet Resources for Consensus Building

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- Using consensus for decision making:  
Why should a team use consensus decision making?
  - <http://www.sna.com/switp/consen.html>
- Consensus Evaluation Summary for Development of New Requirements
  - [http://nssc.llnl.gov/RuleNet/Facilitator/Development\\_Of\\_New\\_Requirements.evaluation.1.html](http://nssc.llnl.gov/RuleNet/Facilitator/Development_Of_New_Requirements.evaluation.1.html)