

# **Wantagh Union Free School District**

**Wantagh, New York 11793**

## **Shared Decision-Making Plan**

**Adopted & Approved by the  
Board of Education  
May 2, 2012**

**Reviewed and Revised by the  
District Shared Decision-Making Team  
April 25, 2012**

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# **Wantagh Union Free School District**

*Five Schools of Excellence*

## **MISSION STATEMENT & DISTRICT GOALS**

### **Mission Statement**

Through a commitment to educational excellence in a secure, supportive environment, the Wantagh Public Schools shall inspire students to develop a strong sense of worth and respect for others, to become lifelong learners and independent thinkers, and to fulfill themselves as concerned citizens in a diverse world.

### **District Goal**

The goal of the Wantagh Union Free School District is to help students to become well-rounded and well-educated individuals prepared for their lives beyond school.

### **Commitment to Excellence**

The school staff, students, parents, Board of Education, and community share the responsibility for this mission.

### **Academic Skills**

Wantagh Union Free School District graduates will:

- Communicate effectively through reading, writing, and communication skills.
- Utilize technology effectively.
- Utilize the skills to access information.
- Be independent and self-reliant.
- Master the skills associated with problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, and organizational & time management.

### **Social Skills**

Wantagh Union Free School District graduates will:

- Function effectively in a democratic society.
- Have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to be competent, confident, and caring adults.
- Have respect for one's self, others, property, and the environment.
- Have a high standard of ethics and integrity.
- Recognize and fulfill their individual potential.
- Have an understanding of the importance of community service.
- Practice teamwork and sportsmanship in all facets of personal interaction.
- Take pride in their accomplishments.

## **SHARED DECISION-MAKING**

By February 1, 1994 all school districts and BOCES must develop and adopt a plan for the participation of parents and teachers with administrators in school-based planning and shared

decision-making. Commissioner's Regulation 100.11 is intended to provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to participate in making decisions about educational issues.

Shared decision-making is a process by which representative members of the educational community of the Wantagh Union Free School District cooperate in identifying educational issues, defining goals and objectives, and implementing and assessing activities to help students reach standards of excellence. Shared decision-making can encompass both the making of final decisions on issues within a group's exclusive control and the making of recommendations when the ultimate decision rests with another individual or group.

The Wantagh Union Free School District has long believed that communication and involvement are essential to a successful school district with successful students. Parents, teachers, students, and others have been involved in planning and decision-making at the building and district levels on a variety of committees and task forces.

### **DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

The plan was developed, and continues to be reviewed and revised every two (2) years by a District- level committee composed of representatives from stakeholder groups.

Stakeholders involved in the shared decision-making process are expected to become knowledgeable about the issues being discussed, participate in discussions and voice their opinions, and work in the best interests of the Team and the School District.

### **STAKEHOLDERS**

In order to determine who should be included in shared decision-making groups, stakeholders were identified. Stakeholders are those groups who have a stake in the Wantagh Union Free School District and its students.

The Stakeholders of the Wantagh Union Free School District are identified as:

- Students
- Teachers
- Parents
- Support staff members (nurses, aides, & monitors)
- Supervisors
- Administrators

When decision-making groups are formed, consideration should be given to inclusion of representatives from the appropriate stakeholder groups. As defined by the State Education Department, the primary stakeholders are parents, teachers and administrators, to be included in all decision-making groups. Other stakeholders can also be included through membership, or can be included through consultation on relevant issues.

All Stakeholders are to receive communication and information about school-related issues and decisions.

### Committee Construct

It was determined in 1994 that the district-wide site-based team would meet only to set up its membership for other district committees. Each committee would work independently, using district and building mission statements as a basis of all work, and other district or building documents as applicable. This is consistent with the collaborative history of this district and all members of the original New Compact Committee agreed to continue these procedures, reviewing it biennially. For each of the following plans, a committee, with membership consistent with district philosophy, created the plan, received input from their respective constituents, modified the plan when necessary, and then presented the plan to the Superintendent and the Board of Education for approval.

- Professional Development Plan (PDP)
- Academic Intervention Services (AIS)

### **LIMITATIONS OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING**

The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools are given certain statutory duties and powers.

Education Law §1709 gives the following powers and duties to Boards of Education of Union Free and Central School Districts:

- To establish rules and regulations concerning the order and discipline of the schools (§1709 [2]);
- To prescribe course of study (§1709[3]);
- To regulate the admission of pupils and their transfer from one class to another, as their scholarship shall warrant (Id);
- To prescribe the textbooks to be used in the schools and to compel a uniformity in the use of the same;
- To have in all respects the superintendence, management, and control of the schools;
- To determine the number of teachers to be employed;
- To provide, in its discretion, in-service training for teachers;
- To have in all respects the superintendence, management, and control of the educational affairs of the district, and, therefore, to have all the powers reasonably necessary to exercise powers granted expressly or by implication and to discharge duties imposed expressly or by implication by this or other statutes.

Education Law §1711 gives the following powers and duties to Superintendents of Schools of School Districts:

- To prepare the content of each course of study authorized by the Board of Education, subject to approval by the Board.
- To recommend to the Board suitable lists of textbooks.

With certain exceptions, a Board of Education or Superintendent may delegate powers and duties.

Through collective bargaining agreements, the Board of Education may delineate certain terms and conditions of employment which may not be changed through a shared decision-making model. Such agreements may exist with the instructional staff, the non-instructional staff, the administrators, and/or the superintendent of schools.

The Board of Education has obligations to adhere to State and Federal laws and regulations which may not be changed through a shared decision-making model.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY IN SHARED DECISION-MAKING**

The shared decision-making committee determined that accountability would be achieved by each representative reporting orally to its respective group. The Superintendent of Schools will provide the Board of Education with a report from any meeting. Furthermore, the committee chairperson(s) would report to the public at a Board of Education Business Meeting in the spring and again in November as to the progress of the group, with the final report being forwarded in December or January. Finally, it was agreed that the committee meetings were open to all members of the public if they wished to observe the deliberations.

#### **Membership**

- Implement established guidelines for group membership.
- Develop additional rules for the determination of membership, as needed.
- Provide knowledge and skills relevant to the group and its purpose.
- Adequately orient and train new members.

#### **Educational Issues**

In acknowledgment of the need for continuous improvement as we prepare all students to be successful in an ever-changing world, the Shared Decision-Making Team will deal with the following educational issues:

- Educational issues about which the group can make decisions
- Any constraints, such as State or Federal laws or regulations that may limit the ability to make decisions on given issues
- Mission Statement
- Objective/Strategies/Goals
- Commencement Expectations for all students
- Shared Decision-Making Plan
- Communication and community involvement
- Curriculum
- Staff Development
- Resource Deployment
- Organization

The following issues were determined by the Shared Decision-Making Team as ***not*** appropriate for discussion:

- Matters of collective bargaining or collective bargaining agreements
- Rates of pay, hours of work and conditions of employment
- Matters contrary to the statutes and regulations of our state or nation
- Matters which fall into the realm of the policy making and/or legal role of the Board of Education
- Discussions of individual students or employees
- Matters of discipline or evaluation of employees

This team is one of the most important groups in the school district. The issues that the team discusses are vital issues which affect every aspect of the school district and its programs.

### Goals

The Shared Decision-Making Team will develop District Objectives and Strategies based on internal and external data which derives from the Mission of the District. These Objectives and Strategies will provide direction for the team and the rest of the District. They will focus on enhancing the teaching and learning process. They will be presented as part of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.

- Understand the District Mission.
- Clearly delineate the group's goals, based on the District's Mission.

### Manner and Extent of Involvement in Decision-Making

The Shared Decision-Making Team involves all members in its deliberations. Decisions are reached by consensus, understanding the parameters of accountability. Members are charged with representing their constituent groups and the best interests of the District as they strive to fulfill their goals. Decisions involving the mission, goals, commencement expectations and other areas, and shared decision-making must be approved by the Board of Education.

- Determine, understand and use the appropriate method for decision-making (e.g. consensus, majority rule, minority rule, authority, veto power).
- Channel recommendations/decisions to appropriate group according to established district flow chart.

### Action Plan

Each year the Shared Decision-Making Team may develop action plans of its own based on its objectives and strategies. These action plans will outline the expected meetings, objectives, actions to be taken, persons responsible, deadlines, and methods to evaluate whether or not the goals were met.

- Develop an action plan to achieve goals which includes:
  - strategies to achieve the goal
  - specific activities
  - timelines and target dates
  - designated personnel responsible
  - method for evaluation of effectiveness

### Communication

The Shared Decision-Making Team will communicate its work to all stakeholders. Each member is to develop a method to communicate with the constituents. Communication may include: newsletters, information posted on the District's Web-site, calendars, reports at meetings, forums, articles, flyers, etc., that are necessary to ensure that all stakeholders and groups are fully informed and that all necessary input is available for the Shared Decision-Making Team.

- Determine what is to be communicated.
- Determine who communicates to whom
  - member to member
  - subgroup to group by established district flow chart

- representatives to constituencies to general public
- Determine methods of communication such as reports, flyers, newsletters, minutes, meetings, bulletins, press, etc.
- Determine frequency of communication.
- Determine vehicle for feedback from all stakeholder groups.

#### Evaluation of Effectiveness

- Evaluate effectiveness in achieving goals and accomplishing activities, utilizing measures of teaching and learning gathered from internal and external sources.
- Analyze and report on effectiveness of group to appropriate groups according to established district flow chart.
- Utilize a wide variety of assessment methods, which may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Assessments (state or local), quizzes, and projects/activities
  - Student grades
  - Midterm and final examinations
  - Portfolios
  - Standardized norm referenced tests
  - Individual diagnostic/prescriptive tests
  - Other forms of authentic/performance assessments

#### Statements of Success

The following component areas will be assessed in order to determine success:

- Educational issues subject to shared decision-making
- Involvement of all parties
- Means and standards used to evaluate improvement of student achievement
- Accountability for decisions
- Dispute resolution process
- Coordination of state and federal requirements for parental involvement

### **DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

#### Definition

Dispute resolution is the process of resolving differences within or among shared decision-making groups.

Dispute resolution applies when a particular group or team:

- is unable to come to a decision
- questions its authority to make a particular decision

Dispute resolution shall not apply to issues that involve:

- district policy
- student or personnel issues
- collective bargaining agreements
- state and federal law



- Commissioner's regulations and Regents rules
- the expenditure of funds beyond that which is available to a particular group or team

The Shared Decision-Making process and procedure depicts lines of communication for sharing information and making decisions that impact the District. These lines of communication and lines of authority should be followed in the dispute resolution process.

#### Strategies

The following steps may be used to resolve differences:

- clarify issues
- identify options
- analyze options
- achieve consensus on choice of options
- implement option
- monitor and evaluate

Other alternatives to further assist the group or team in the dispute resolution are:

- bring in an outside facilitator
- get more training
- do more research
- identify and remove constraints
- decide on a compromise solution that might involve a trial period, a pilot program or a staggered implementation

If the above strategies do not bring resolution, the group or team may elect to:

- reach a decision in a way other than consensus
- defer the decision to a future time
- present the dispute to the next team or group on the organizational chart for resolution

#### **STATE & FEDERAL REGULATIONS FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The Wantagh Union Free School District will meet all state and federal requirements for parental involvement and will coordinate them with this plan.