



# Shared Decision Making Plan 2016-2018

## **Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Schools**

*Ensuring opportunities for learning, personal growth and social responsibility*

Approved by the BH-BL Board of Education  
August 2016

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The BH-BL school district is well known for its success in educating all of its students to their full potential and has long had a history of engaging staff and the community in planning to improve instruction and outcomes. The school district is committed to the belief that decisions are in the best interest of students when appropriately shared. The creation and implementation of the APPR 3012-c, building council structure, and improvement of the learning climate in our schools are among examples of successful shared decision making. In each case those affected by the decision had an opportunity to influence the outcome. There have also been cases where those affected by a decision did not have the opportunity to influence the outcome. It is important to learn from these situations and update this plan accordingly.

This document is designed to assist Shared Decision Making Committees in their tasks as outlined in the NYSED regulation 100.11. This plan is not limited to school based SDM committees, but extends to all committees and curriculum councils functioning within the school community in order that the end result of every process shall be to improve educational performance and shall be conducted in a cooperative, respectful and open manner. It is understood that after using the SDM process to gather the appropriate input, final authority on all matters rests with the Superintendent and the Board of Education.

## II. A Plan for Awareness of BH-BL Shared Decision Making Processes.

The Burnt Hills Ballston Lake School district is committed to the belief that decisions are in the best interest of students when appropriately shared. This committee further believes that maintaining a consistently high level of awareness and commitment is necessary for the day to day success of cooperative planning and shared decision making.

- A. The district will make use of relevant technologies to make all constituent groups aware of issues that have been submitted for SDM committee consideration. The BH-BL webpage, social Media, and daily reports via email to parents and community members, who have registered to receive them via School News Notifier, are all appropriate venues for raising awareness of SDM issues and receiving input in a timely manner. PTA meetings, newsletters and district bulletins are also good methods for sharing information on decisions that have been made and for seeking additional input where deadlines are less of an issue. The SDM Plan will be made available on the district webpage.
- B. Representatives serving on SDM committees will communicate either electronically or in person, with their constituents during the work of the committee and when the representative has to present a point of view to the committee as they seek consensus.
- C. All new employees and Board of Education members shall receive training on shared Decision Making processes to create awareness of their rights and responsibilities to participate in input and decision making that will affect them or their group. This training will be provided collaboratively by the Superintendent of Schools, or designees, the Administrative Association President, or designees and Teachers Association president, or designees. *(Note: The 2015 Biennial SDM Review Committee recommends the production of a formal presentation and training materials for this process in order to bring standardization to the process.)*
- D. Whenever a committee begins its work (or at the beginning of a school year for standing committees), the Co-Chairs of the committee will be responsible for providing orientation to the Plan and processes for all new staff. \*See attachment 1. Mandatory Checklist for Shared Decision Making Committees.
- E. Participation of parents and community members is a critical part of the Part 100.12 Shared Decision Making Regulations. The district will ensure that community members receive training similar to that received by the staff and Board of Education. The superintendent or designee will provide an orientation to PTA presidents in the Spring of each school year through the PTA Council in order to assist them in selecting parent representatives. This will also include an opportunity for parents to volunteer to be a part of Shared Decision Making groups.

### III. Defining issues subject to Cooperative Planning and Shared Decision Making

A. Committee co-chairs work together to set the agenda for the meetings of standing committees. The superintendent typically creates the charge for ad hoc committees (see Section IV). In determining which topics or issues are appropriate for the Shared Decision Making process, the following questions should be considered:

1. Does the decision affect student development and/or educational performance in an entire building and / or multiple buildings?
2. Would the SDM committee have the resources available to implement the decision?
3. Would any or all members of the SDM committee have the authority to implement the decision?
4. Will the decision impact one building, several buildings, or the entire district?
5. Is the topic or issue addressed governed by any of the negotiated contracts or Board of Education Policy?
6. Through consensus, would all members of the SDM committee accept responsibility for the decision?
7. Does this decision need multiple participants to assure effective and representative decision outcomes?

SDM committees should be aware that they would not have the authority, resources, jurisdiction, or the responsibility to make decisions concerning issues governed by negotiated contracts or federal, state and local law, regulations, codes or judicial rulings, or Board of Education policy.

B. The commissioner's regulations do not define which educational issues the school based SDM committees must consider. There are countless issues that may require and benefit from the attention of the SDM. A school board is expected to work together with SDM committees to define what issues are appropriate for consideration. Some topics that have been discussed in Shared Decision Making teams in this district in the past include:

- Capital Project/Bond Referendum
- High School Academic Climate
- Character Education/Bullying Prevention
- After-School Programs
- Blended Learning
- Full-Day Kindergarten
- Elementary Report Card
- District Student Management System
- Technology Integration/Building Technology
- Safety Plans
- Participation on Hiring Committees for Teachers and Administrators
- Elementary Math and Reading Curriculum
- APPR for Teachers and Principals
- Professional Development Plan
- Staff Development Opportunities
- Health, Wellness, and Safety
- Summer Curriculum Project Building Priorities
- Criteria for Application for Late Arrival and Early Dismissal
- Student Recognition

In an ever-changing society, it is hard to anticipate all the issues that could affect our schools. The list above is offered to stimulate the thought process rather than to limit it. Committee Co-Chairs and individuals charging committees should consider the questions in Paragraph A of this section when determining whether or not an issue is appropriate for the shared-decision-making process.

#### IV. The Manner and Extent of the Expected Involvement of All Parties (OPERATIONS)

##### A. Types of SDM Committees

1. **Building Council-** This is the building level shared decision making committee, designed to deal with issues that arise affecting curriculum, instruction, school climate and student development in a specific building. As discussed in NYSED Regulation 100.11, the purpose of school-based planning and shared decision making shall be to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status, race, sex, language background, or disability. The functioning of the Building Council is discussed specifically in the Teacher Association contract. In the rare case that a superintendent would not be able to support a decision made by a Building Council, the superintendent will come to the specific Building Council to discuss the matter with members of the Council in person. Following that meeting, if the superintendent still cannot support the decision, or if a compromise cannot be reached, the superintendent will provide the Council with a written explanation of the district's position.
2. **Standing District SDM Committees** - There are a number of standing district level committees. These include Technology, Health and Safety, APPR, Insurance, and the Staff Development Plan Committee. If the superintendent rejects recommendations of a standing SDM committee, the superintendent will provide a written response which includes an explanation for any recommendations from the committee that were not supported by the District.
3. **Ad Hoc SDM Committees** - There are times when the Board or the Superintendent will find it necessary to form a committee for a short time to investigate a specific issue and issue specific recommendations. This is referred to as an "*ad hoc*" committee. The purpose of referring an issue to an ad hoc SDM committee is to improve the quality of education for all students. Administrators will be sensitive to the number of Ad-Hoc Committees that are being charged at any given point. The following guidelines for ad hoc committees should be followed:
  - a. When an *ad hoc* committee is necessary, the superintendent will create a charge for the committee. The charge to an *ad hoc* SDM committee should include:
    - i. Identification of the person or group providing the charge
    - ii. A clear statement of the problem/question to be addressed
    - iii. A definition of committee membership
    - iv. An opportunity to seek clarification of the charge
    - v. Clear expectations and a clearly defined role of the committee
    - vi. Clearly stated authority of the committee and its members

- vii. A directive to consider financial impacts if necessary
- viii. A realistic timeline with flexibility when appropriate
- ix. Support for a decision making process that will arrive at a conclusion based on data, research and expertise.

The superintendent will provide a draft of the charge to the leadership of all affected stakeholder groups for their input. Once the charge is finalized, leadership of stakeholder groups will provide the names of individuals who will serve on the committee. Ad-Hoc Committees will follow the same guidelines as other district level SDM Committees. After the Ad-Hoc committee finishes its work it will issue a report to the superintendent. The superintendent will provide a written response to the ad hoc committee's recommendations in a timely fashion. This response should include an explanation for any recommendations from the committee that were not supported by the District.

**B. Determining the level at which topics/issues should be addressed in SDM committees.** When it has been determined that a topic or issue is subject to cooperative planning and shared decision making, the issue should be brought to the appropriate SDM committee. The following should help to determine the level at which topics/issues should be discussed:

1. **Individual Building Level SDM** - It will be the responsibility of Building Councils to deal with issues that arise affecting curriculum, instruction, school climate and student development where those issues are limited to that specific building. EXAMPLES of issues/topics that may only impact one building include, but are not limited to, new courses (HS), homework policies, schedule changes/teaming (MS), holiday celebration guidelines (Elem), disciplinary procedures.

2. **Multi-Building Level SDM (3 Elementary Schools or MS/HS)**- Some issues require decisions that affect more than one building. It is important that a committee working on such issues understand that the committee decisions may impact groups or buildings in different ways. Examples of topics/issues that impact more than one building include, but are not limited to, Elementary Report Card, Elementary RTI, ELA/Math Elementary Curriculum, AAP schedule (impacts both MS & HS), Crossing Route 50- MS/HS Transition program, District Technology Committee, Health and Safety, and many hiring committees.

Communication is essential to help ensure that SDM practices are kept at the forefront in these sometimes complicated situations. The leaders of these groups- (whether they are co-chairs, curricular administrators (K12s), building Principals, or building Presidents) have the responsibility to ensure that Building Councils in the individual schools are kept informed and input is gathered about the issues before these multi-building committees. Whenever possible, this should take the form of items being added to the Building Council agenda for discussion and/or recommendations. (It is strongly recommended that the co-chairs -or K-12s in the case of curriculum committees - follow up on important items to ensure the items are on the building council agenda.) When appropriate, standing items should be added to building council agendas to facilitate this process.

3. **District-level SDM committees** - Some committees are the result of state-mandates or are formed by the Board of Education to consider changes to the District as a *whole*. Examples include: APPR, SDM, PD Plan and Bond Committees. Such committees should follow all relevant principles and procedures to the

extent possible. It may be necessary to alter some specifics due to state requirements that trump the details specified in this document.

### C. **Composition of Committees**

The composition of SDM committees will vary based upon the type and function of the group. Wherever the composition of an SDM committee is governed by collective bargaining agreements, the guidelines in those agreements will be followed. In all other cases, the district will seek to have as broad and representative a stakeholder group as possible.

### D. **Selection of members**

The selection of members will be decided by the groups they represent (i.e., the Teachers Association will select the teachers, Administrative Association will select the administrators, the parent organization will select the parents/community members; student government will select the student participants, the support staff will select their representative, etc.). Each group will have a policy to allow for varied membership and will encourage broad representation. Unless governed by contract, two co-chairs for each SDM committee will be selected through collaboration between the association heads and the superintendent.

**Note:** It has proven especially difficult to provide adequate, active parent representation on building councils and ad hoc committees, although there are specific examples (i.e. District Wide Facilities Committee of 2012-13) where there were far more interested parent and community members than there were available seats on the committee. In order to ensure that parents and community members are adequately represented on appropriate committees, the district will commit to the following practices:

1. The District will aggressively advertise all available seats for parent/community involvement using social media and the district web page.
2. The District will ensure that parents and community members are made aware of the value and opportunity presented by the district's strong commitment to SDM. (See Section II, paragraph E above.)
3. Parent/community seats will be filled by individuals who are NOT employees of the district.
4. Co-Chairs will make every attempt to accommodate parent/community members in scheduling meetings, including such things as varying the times of *ad hoc* committees and holding meetings in locations where video conferencing is available.
5. When a committee calls for parental representation, the committee will not move forward until the parent positions are filled appropriately.

### E. **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### 1. **Committee chairs and co-chairs are expected to:**

- a. Schedule meetings for a defined duration. (i.e. 60 to 90 minutes). If the committee finds that more than 60 to 90 minutes are regularly needed, it is recommended that the committee co-chairs pursue excused time (½ day) during the school day to accomplish the committee work.
- b. Scheduling meetings carefully. A central calendar listing all recurring or major meetings, including the need to consult with the TA President about scheduling meetings for Thursday afternoons, will be very useful to people trying to schedule new meetings. Once it's been created it should be used

to schedule meetings. Committees will also be sensitive to the availability of community members when scheduling meetings in which they should be involved. Multiple meetings should be scheduled out into the future so that committee members are able to plan for attendance.

- c. Solicit input from committee members for each meeting agenda.
- d. Develop a uniform format for agenda and minutes of their meetings. Agendas should clearly indicate the key issues to be dealt with at each meeting such that anyone reading the agenda would be capable of providing input to a committee representative on those issues.
- e. Publish an agenda such that it is available to staff, students and community members at least 3 days before each meeting.
- f. Ensure comprehensive minutes are recorded. Allow all committee members to take part in creation, review, and approval of the minutes through the use of Google docs. If the minutes are live, be sure all committee members agree that the minutes accurately reflect the meeting before the meeting ends. (If there are any concerns, consider taking the minutes offline until the questions are resolved.)
- g. Run an efficient and productive meeting that starts and ends on time.
- h. Provide members with mechanisms to work between meetings to accomplish committee goals.
- i. Make minutes of SDM Committee meetings available to the public. Minutes will include a statement identifying the stakeholder representatives, their respective constituency group and a notice that they may be contacted with questions or concerns.

**2. All SDM-committee members are expected to:**

- a. Provide input to the co-chairs for meeting agendas
- b. Solicit input from constituents (ideally for each meeting)
- c. Prepare for, attend and participate in each meeting
- d. Represent and reflect the issues and input of constituents
- e. Communicate proposals of the committee to their constituency group in a timely manner.
- f. Gain feedback from constituents on topics and issues discussed
- g. Communicate (and, if necessary, explain) decisions of the committee
- h. Actively participate in the work of the group (thinking through solutions, creating documents, etc.)
- i. Be on time for meetings and have good attendance
- j. Justify his/her opinion or perspective with relevant facts and logic.
- k. Respect the opinions and perspective of other members. Respect requires attention and thoughtfulness. It does not, however, require agreement. Lack of agreement should never be construed as lack of respect.
- l. Work to successfully implement the team's decision and to be available to explain the decision and its implications to stakeholders.

**3. All constituents are expected to:**

- a. Read agendas
- b. Offer input to committee reps about agenda items
- c. Read committee minutes
- d. Discuss important issues with others

- e. Consider joining a committee

## V. Means and standards to evaluate student achievement

The purpose of the New York State Learning Standards and the Shared Decision-Making regulation and process is to improve student achievement. The following guidelines will help provide direction for Building Councils.

The school council shall undertake an annual planning process that includes, but is not limited to:

1. Using school performance information to improve student success.
2. Setting building instructional goals consistent with identified building needs and District standards of excellence, Framework for Planning, and the BH-BL 21st Century Framework for Learning.
3. Reviewing the organization and design of the instructional delivery system and student support services.
4. Maintaining a direct relationship with the K-12 Curriculum Committees and the District Staff Development Committee.
5. Accepting, reviewing and prioritizing requests for building level summer curriculum projects. Each building council will send a professional representative to a joint meeting with the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction to review all summer curriculum work requests.
6. Evaluating student achievement in relation to the identified building goals and the District standards of excellence.
7. Developing a long range building plan for achieving building goals and updating it annually.
8. Monitoring the progress of the plan.
9. Accepting responsibility for presenting the five-year plan to the Board of Education.
10. Reporting the results to the school community.

## VI. Accountability

Once every other year, School Building Councils must assess the success of their shared decision making and school based management processes and provide a report to the Communication Council to be used in required reporting to SED. This assessment must be based on data pertaining to improvements in student achievement and stakeholder beliefs about their level of involvement in school and district decision making. The term stakeholder includes community members.

## VII. Dispute Resolution

SDM committee decisions must be made within the constraints of Education Law, Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulations, union contracts, and budgetary limits established by the Board of Education. Decisions are to be arrived at through consensus whenever possible. Consensus is reached when all participants agree that they understand something or some issue, can live with a decision, will support it and will communicate it. Every attempt will be made to reach consensus on issues.

Consensus decision making is a process used to ensure that every individual has involvement in a decision. It requires everyone's participation. Listening, thinking, studying, sharing, trust, and respect are values inherent in the process. All members must agree to support -- or at least not undermine -- a decision. Reaching consensus **does not** mean the vote is unanimous, the result is everyone's first choice, or everyone agrees. Consensus lends to the development of the commitment and ownership necessary in collaborative decision making. Said in another way, consensus is reached when all members agree with one of the following statements:

"I strongly support this decision and I will be a leader."

“I agree with this decision and I will give a lot of support.”

“I can live with this decision; I will be supportive.”

“I don’t agree with this decision, but I will trust the opinion of the group.”

If consensus is unattainable, other strategies will be employed. These strategies may include, but are not limited to: mediation, sending issues to a sub-committee for further work, problem-solving models, etc.

If an impasse is reached, it may be resolved by a 75% vote of the total committee membership in support of a committee decision.

**VIII. The manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision making will be coordinated with and met by the overall plan.**

Parents are active participants of all Building Councils and other SDM committees. Parents are encouraged to participate via District-recognized parent organizations, community announcements, school newsletters, public forums and personal invitations. The involvement of parents in school planning and decision-making does not conflict with any state and federal requirements addressing the same.

Building Councils and other SDM committees adhere to the regulations for parent involvement in special education, academic intervention services and other programs. Any conflict between decision making by any SDM committee and federal- or state-mandated programs will be referred to the Superintendent or his/her designee who will decide on the appropriate resolution.

## **Glossary**

**Assessment** – A measurement or other systematic evaluation of the quality and range of student accomplishment.

**Consensus** – Consensus is reached when all participants agree that they understand something or some issue, can live with a decision, will support it, and will communicate it.

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**-On January 10th, 2011, the NYS Board of Regents approved the recommended additions to the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy and Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics, plus a new set of Prekindergarten Standards. Additional information about statewide implementation and the development of P-12 curriculum models using the CCSS can be found at [www.NYSED.gov](http://www.NYSED.gov).

**New York State Learning Standards** – Levels or degree of expected student attainment, formalized at three levels (elementary, intermediate, commencement) by the state, across seven curricular areas: English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Languages Other Than English, The Arts, Career Development and Occupational Studies, and Physical Education, Health and Consumer Education.

**SBC** – School Building Council a school building based committee representing all stakeholders.

**SED** State Education Department

**Shared Decision-Making** – “A process by which all members of the education community at the district and school levels cooperate in identifying educational issues, defining goals, formulating policy and implementing and assessing activities to help students reach standards of excellence” (*State Education Department, A New Lexicon, 1992*).

**Standards** – Statements of the level or degree of attainment students are expected to accomplish for a specified outcome as well as the methods used to assess that attainment.

**State Assessments** – Examinations required by New York State of all students to determine their academic achievement and that of the district toward the accomplishment of the New

**MANDATORY CHECKLIST FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEES**

Title of Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee charged by: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ District Standing Committee (on-going, e.g. Curriculum Committee)

\_\_\_\_\_ District Ad Hoc Committee (specific purpose, e.g. Bond Committee)

\_\_\_\_\_ State Mandated Committee (e.g., PD Plan Committee, SDM Plan Committee)

**MANDATORY CHECKLIST FOR SHARED DECISION MAKING COMMITTEES**

An orientation process must be conducted (1) for committee members at the start of each school year for existing committees and (2) at the first meeting for an ad hoc committee. Depending on the type of committee, the chair or the co-chairs will be responsible for the orientation.

The Orientation Process should be recorded in the minutes of the first meeting and include:

1. A discussion (select from appendix 1) of the shared decision making culture in BH-BL including the history of Shared Decision Making
2. A discussion (select from appendix 2) of the need for respect and equality among committee members
3. An explanation of the consensus model used in BH-BL (refer to page 8 in the Shared Decision Making Plan from 2016-18)
4. Review "Roles and Responsibilities" section of the plan (Section IV E) .
5. A discussion of the committee's charge.
6. Creation of a constituent group list for each member
7. Presentation by constituent representatives of their plan for communication with their constituent groups.
8. The creation of a preliminary Action Plan/Timeline.

At the end of the committee's work, all members of the committee attest that the following have occurred:

- Agendas were generated by co-chairs and sent to the Community at least 3 days prior to all meetings.
- Minutes were created and approved by the committee and sent to the Community as soon as possible.
- Reps were given time to gather and digest information from constituents before decisions are made by the committee (i.e. issues should not be raised and decided upon during the same meeting).
- The committee evaluated the effectiveness of the shared decision making process during the committee timeline (halfway through the timeline at the very least). Such evaluations should be both announced on the agenda and recorded in the minutes.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a training video to be shown to SDM committee members, new employees etc. and be made available on social media and/or the district website as well as on PTA websites if PTAs are willing to host it. This video could contain interviews with early adopters of SDM in the district like Stu Horn and Dick O'Rourke as well as more recent TA and administration members. Mr. Montesano's history document that he shared with our committee would be a good template. The video would also include information on where SDM documents and information are available to the public and who they should contact for more information.
2. Write an SDM training curriculum to assure consistency in delivery of the SDM message.
3. Provide SDM training to all new employees so that they can be sensitized to speaking up when they believe that they or their group are affected by a decision being made.
4. Make a presentation on SDM to Student Government Organization at the start of each school year.
5. Create a central calendar listing all recurring or major meetings including the need to consult with the TA President about meetings scheduled for Thursday afternoons. This will be very useful to people trying to schedule meetings.
6. Create appendices 1 and 2 (see checklist above).