



# Standards of Operation

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### **COOPERATIVE DECISION MAKING (CDM)**

In order to assure successful implementation of the cooperative decision making (CDM) process, the district and the JCEA agree to incorporate the CDM Task Force report into this memorandum of understanding. Further, the parties agree to the following:

1. Building CDM committees will develop norms which provide a safe environment for all stakeholders and encourage their full participation in the CDM process.
2. The building CDM committee will operate separately from the building liaison committee, as provided for in Article 20.
3. Funding for training will be made available in an amount to be determined on an annual basis in conjunction with the budget development process.

Full report follows.

### **COOPERATIVE DECISION MAKING**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The concept of shared decision making was first explored in January 1990 as an avenue to involve stakeholders and make better decisions in the district. A task force of representatives of the employee associations, PTA, and the district sponsored three district wide conversations for school employees and community members to create an action plan for shared decision making in Jeffco. In August 1991, the Board of Education adopted the Cooperative Decision Making Statement of Beliefs which states in part, "There is an expectation that schools and departments in the district will use a cooperative decision making process whenever appropriate."

A broad based task force worked for two years to identify common ingredients of successful models; determine unresolved issues; learn about needs and resources; and make recommendations based on 78 site interviews throughout the district.

In May 1993, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Education and JCEA created a charge to the Cooperative Decision Making Task Force. The charge was: define cooperative decision making; clarify the scope and authority of decision making at work sites; determine training needed; and develop a transition process and models, and a proposed timeline for implementation.

This document represents the work of the task force in fulfilling that charge. It is expected that all schools and work sites will have a functioning structure for cooperative decision making by September 1996. Students and their proficiencies are the primary focus of all cooperative

decisions made at each work site and serve as the foundation for a student centered vision.

Cooperative decision making works best in a context which ensures broad based representation of primary clients including: students, parents, employees, and the community. Other participants can be included in the process, as the need requires. Each school's accountability plan and each work site's goals and objectives will reflect a student centered vision. These will provide the necessary framework for effective implementation of a district wide, student centered quality program. It is expected that all decisions made are in compliance with federal and state regulations, employee agreements, and district policies and procedures.

The cooperative decision making process is flexible enough to ensure effective responses to varying situations and needs. Collaboration which seeks consensus enhances the potential for successful implementation of decisions. The cooperative decision making process will look different at the various work sites. A collaborative process will be used to determine: 1) which decisions will be collaborative, consultative, or command at a given work site; 2) which decision making methods will be used; 3) in which areas of scope and authority cooperative decision making will occur; and 4) what are the roles and responsibilities for implementation.

## II. DEFINITION

Cooperative decision making is a collaborative process that includes all of these elements:

1. A commonly held, student-centered vision
2. A climate of trust
3. A respect for diverse ideas and interests
4. An open dialogue and debate
5. A shared leadership, accountability, authority, and responsibility
6. An actively involved, broad based representation of employees, parents, students, and the community.

The goal of cooperative decision making is to continuously improve education for the students in Jefferson County Public Schools.

## III. TYPES OF DECISIONS

CDM recognizes that there are different types of decisions:

- **Collaborative:** Decisions made by stakeholders and/or representatives of stakeholder groups. Collaboration based on consensus ensures that all stakeholders will have a voice and will support the decisions.
- **Consultative:** Decisions made by the designated individuals after consultation with stakeholders and/or representatives of stakeholder groups.
- **Command:** Decisions made by the designated individuals without consultation with stakeholders and/or representatives of stakeholder groups.

## IV. SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

Scope and authority determine what types of decisions are made and how they are made. The impact of a school/department decisions on other parts of the organization must be considered. Therefore, cooperative decision making teams need to select decisions within the context of approved employee contracts, adopted Board policies, and existing federal, state, and local laws. Decisions to be made may include, but are not limited to, the following examples.

**Instruction:** Suggestions for potential decisions include: Instructional models and strategies; student assessment and placement; learning resources, staff development, and employee training; student awards and recognition; enrichment activities and exceptional students needs.

**Allocation of Resources:** Suggestions for potential decisions include: Interviewing, selecting, and recognizing employees and volunteers; recruiting volunteers; budget development, expenditures, and evaluation; grant writing and the use of community and volunteer resources.

**Governance and Management:** Suggestions for potential decisions include: Room assignments, facility management, support services, transportation, field trips, discipline plan, extra-curricular activities, student progress reporting procedures, scheduling, community relations, and communications.

Requests from the site for variances and memoranda of understanding will be reviewed at both the work site and within the articulation areas, as well as by representatives of appropriate state agencies, Board of Education, district administration, employee organizations, and community groups. A procedure has been established for seeking variances from the JCEA R-1 Master Agreement.

## **V. STANDARDS FOR THE COOPERATIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

The following standards and questions are designed to assist in the establishment and ongoing assessment of your cooperative decision making process: Schools/work sites are in various stages of development in their practice of CDM and may use these accordingly.

1. The participants are broadly representative of the school community. What procedures are you following that assures that your membership is representative of your school/work site community? How will you assure that the membership selection process is fair and open? What is the process by which you replace members? How will you assure that each member has an equal voice? How will you assure ethnic diversity?
2. The process operates with written rules that are widely understood. How does your governing document establish roles and responsibilities? What is the structure for your process? What is your plan for distributing your governing documents to your school/work site community?
3. The roles of the various decision making groups are understood within the CDM process. What decision making groups exist at your school or work site? What is the relationship among decision making groups at your school/work site?
4. The CDM process has a shared vision that focuses on improvement of student learning. What is the shared vision around which your cooperative decision making process is organized? In what way does your vision include improving the learning environment and education/services to all students?
5. The CDM process determines what decisions are made and how they are made. What decisions will be made at the school/work site? What is your plan for collaboratively determining how decisions are made and the manner in which they will be communicated to members of your school/work site community?
6. Meetings are open and at convenient times. What process will you use to assure that meetings are open and convenient to all?
7. The CDM process is communicated internally and externally. How does your communication plan serve your internal and external communities? What plan do you have for producing, maintaining, and distributing a written record of your process to your school/work site community?
8. The process is evaluated to determine its effectiveness. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your process?
9. Training is provided for all participants. What is your strategy for providing ongoing technical knowledge/training for each participant?

10. Assistance is utilized when needed. What additional assistance does your school/work site require in order to help you establish or improve your cooperative decision making process, e.g., consultation, concrete examples, technical assistance, and training?

## **VI. CDM IMPLEMENTATION**

It is expected that all schools and work sites will have a functioning structure for cooperative decision making by September 1996. Some sites that already have cooperative decision making structures in operation, and after self evaluation, may move into step two of implementation. For those sites in the early stages of development, it is recommended that a facilitator be used to provide assistance in the development and ongoing evaluation of a successful cooperative decision making process. Sites that do not have a cooperative decision making process in place may use an existing group or groups to meet the cooperative decision making standards. Ongoing training of all stakeholders is a critical and necessary component of successful cooperative decision making.

The following steps detail a process for successful transition to cooperative decision making at all schools and work sites:

### **Step One : Development of Site Cooperative Decision Making**

- 1. Conduct a self assessment of critical attributes to determine readiness or effectiveness of operation using the questions in Section V., Standards for the Cooperative Decision Making Process.
- 2. Prepare a school or site implementation program with defined time lines.
- 3. Define a cooperative decision making governance structure. To implement a cooperative decision making process, sites may use existing committees, restructure existing committees, create a new entity, or any combination to meet the defined cooperative decision making standards for their site.
- 4. Adopt and implement a scope and authority model (who will decide what).
- 5. Develop method for selecting CDM participants.
- 6. Plan and provide training for key stakeholders.

Examples and detailed descriptions of how sites have used cooperative decision making, appointed selected participants, and structured their process are described in the "Cooperative Decision Making Resource Book." The resource book also includes samples of operating rules, process descriptions, and membership structures of existing cooperative decision making systems. Copies of the resource book will be available in conjunction with the self assessment video that the Task Force will provide. (See page 7.)

### **Step Two: Implementation of Site CDM Plan**

1. Formalize goals and objectives.
2. Continue training for stakeholders participating in the program.
3. Revisit scope and authority model.
4. Provide ongoing evaluation of program.

## **VII SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE**

As the district moves toward the full implementation of a cooperative decision making process, schools/work sites will require support to understand how this process can best meet the needs of the school/work site. To provide this support, a team of trained facilitators will be made available to assist these schools/work sites. District employees, parents, and volunteers who have demonstrated an ability to provide positive leadership for the cooperative decision making process will be recruited as facilitators.

In addition to support and assistance from trained facilitators, there will be a process review to assess the effectiveness of CDM on a district wide basis. A coordinating committee will be structured to provide this process review.

### **Site Evaluation**

A critical first step in implementing cooperative decision making in the district will be the identification of a CDM process at each school/work site. This report recommends providing support to participants of training and technical assistance. The Cooperative Decision Making (CDM) Task Force will produce an interactive video that will assist all schools/work sites in a self assessment to determine where they are in the process and what needs to be done. After viewing the video and completing the self assessment, schools/work sites will determine training needs and utilize their allocation from the CDM funds identified by the Board.

Schools and work sites will also receive a CDM Resource Book that will contain samples from other schools and districts, and a list of resources for assistance and support.

At the conclusion of each year, each school/site will be required to complete a form reporting on how assistance was used as well as the effectiveness of cooperative decision making efforts. The form will ask for signatures of each participant serving at the school/site.

### **Support and Assistance by Local Facilitators**

The district will create a cooperative decision making support team by training volunteers who will be willing to assist sites on an "as called" basis. Volunteers will include teachers, administrators, classified employees, parents, students, and others who currently use cooperative decision making at their site.

To create the pool of facilitators, the following organizations should be asked to solicit volunteers for this task. Following training, the names will be compiled for distribution to each school/site council:

- Jefferson County Education Association
- Jefferson County Administrators Association
- Classified School Employees Association
- Student Councils
- Parent Teacher Association
- District Accountability Committee
- Volunteers/Seniors Active in the District

### **District CDM Coordinating Committee**

A Coordinating Committee will be created with two assigned responsibilities:

- Review of site appeals
- District cooperative decision making assessment

The Coordinating Committee will meet a minimum of twice a year, mid-year and at the end of the school year, to evaluate progress in cooperative decision making efforts throughout the district. To conduct this review, the committee will use the data from the feedback provided by sites at the end of the year.

The second function proposed for the Coordinating Committee is to provide an appeals process for schools/sites. The Coordinating Committee should be composed of Board of Education appointees and representatives of JCEA, JCAA, CSEA, district accountability, parent/teacher/student associations, volunteers, and community organizations.

When presented with an appeal, the Coordinating Committee, using the standards set for all schools/sites, will determine if the appeal is a cooperative decision making issue. It is not the purpose of the Coordinating Committee to review site decisions, but to assist in assuring a cooperative process has taken place.

The Coordinating Committee members may be expected to gather appropriate data prior to convening meetings. Coordinating Committee meetings will be convened to review appeals, to collect information from all parties, and to respond with suggestions for process improvement.

Cooperative decision making is a process designed to encourage involvement for mutual benefit. It is the expectation of the Board of Education that the process be developed within each school and department. The purpose of the district Cooperative Decision Making Coordinating Committee is to assure that such a process is in place and to assist in facilitating the process where possible. The issues and procedures used in cooperative decision making will always be within the limitations of Board of Education policies and procedures, negotiated agreements, and state laws.