Event 13
Form the Decisioning Team

When and Why To Use this Event

**Who conducts this event.** The Core Team (with help from the facilitator and other individuals, as needed).

**Intent.** The primary intent of this event is to expand the Core Team into the Decisioning Team. The Core Team should design the process by which its own existence is replaced by a political support team, sometimes called the Decisioning Team, and it should conduct that process by selecting the new team members.

**When.** This activity should not be undertaken until you have completed Events 11-13, because they help to establish a design culture and capability that are critical to the successful formation of the new, larger team.

**Context.** You have completed a number of contextual assessments, such as that of the district and community capacity for change (Events 12) and assessment of competing change efforts (Event 13). Now this event entails using the knowledge and capabilities acquired through those events to expand the Core Team into the Decisioning Team. It will be followed by designing and using a norming process with the new team members, and building their knowledge of, and motivation for, systemic change (Event 15).

**Synopsis.** The Decisioning Team should be relatively large (20-25 people) so as to have broad stakeholder and power-broker involvement, and this team should have as much decision-making authority as the school board can and will empower them with. In this event, the Core Team designs the process for forming these two teams and uses the process to select the new team members.

**Rationale.** If you skip this event and do not expand the Core Team at all, you will not have enough opinion leaders actively involved in and owning the change effort for it to have much chance of success. On the other hand, if you do expand the Core Team but without the guidance of this event, you may find that the process for expanding the Core Team is not well suited to your particular situation and needs. Also, the new team may not have the needed make-up, culture, knowledge and skills for them to succeed in this difficult undertaking.

**Implied Values.** Continued emphasis on an appropriate culture and climate for change, balance of power, inclusion of important groups, facilitator neutrality, open and honest communication with the Core Team.

**Prerequisites.** Events 11-13.

**Calendar Time.** 2-3 weeks
Activity 14 Form the Decisioning Team

Goals

To decide what type of selection process to use in selecting members for the Decisioning Team, and to redesign that process.

To select the new members for the Decisioning Team.

Process

1. Tailor this event to your context.

   Review all the steps in this event and carefully consider how best to make them fit with your context.

   The Core Team members have invested a great deal in their work, team identity, and culture; and therefore evolving into something new is likely to be a difficult process. Nevertheless, it is beneficial to expand the team into a new one with all members from the Core Team present.

   The Decisioning Team functions in a decision-making capacity. Most of the design (planning) work is done by smaller Design Teams, and it is then their responsibility to bring the Decisioning Team along with them in their thought processes and to incorporate the Decisioning Team’s perspectives into their own thinking and design work. Having two types of teams requires increased coordination; however, it also has the advantage of keeping the design teams small enough to work intensively and efficiently, while still giving broad involvement and ownership of opinion leaders in all stakeholder groups.

   (Time: 1/2 hour)

2. Decide on breadth of stakeholder participation.

   Determine how broad you (the Core Team) want the Decisioning Team to be. Based on the work you have already done in identifying stakeholder groups and negotiating stakeholder involvement with the school leadership, reassess the commitment to broad participation. If you are committed to broad stakeholder empowerment, this must be reflected in your member selection process, and you will need to identify all the stakeholder groups to be represented. You may find it helpful to review Sarason's text, Parental Participation and the Political Principle (1995).

   (Time: 1/2 hour)

3. Decide on a member-selection process.

   Choose a selection process based on the needs of your unique community and the nature of a Decisioning Team. Consider the issues that arose during the selection process for the Core Team (Event 5), and use this information to inform your decision on the selection process you will use.

   (Time: 1-2 hours)
Selection Process Options and Steps

The following is a list of possible selection models and step-by-step procedures for using them. We recommend the Exclusive Selection Process, as laid out in Carr & Reigeluth (1993), or the Democratic Selection Process with Criteria, or some combination approach that involves one or both of those two. Of course, you should adopt/adapt these models for your context.

Facilitator Selection
The facilitator may choose members for both the Decisioning and Design Teams. While it is true that the facilitator was instrumental in selecting members for the Core Team, it may be time to re-examine this option. During the past six events or so, the facilitator should have been increasingly trying to make her/himself obsolete by developing the Core Team’s capabilities. For the facilitator to make team selection decisions unilaterally at this point would be detrimental to that process. Furthermore, stakeholder involvement and ownership have been cultivated. For the facilitator and the Core Team to make the selection decisions unilaterally at this point would be detrimental to that process. Therefore we do not recommend this option.

Leadership Appointee
Here a leader appoints a member to the team directly. This process is very similar to facilitator-based selection. Of course the leader is capable of making these decisions and weighing criteria and size considerations. However, this form, like facilitator selection, is very dangerous in terms of community perceptions. There is the distinct possibility that those who are not appointed and others in the community could be easily convinced that the group is "stacked" to be pro-school administration. This is also a danger, depending on the community context, if there are negative relationships between the leadership and school personnel within the school itself. Therefore, we do not recommend this approach.

Democratic Selection with Criteria
This selection process entails asking each stakeholder group to vote on members it views as its opinion leaders. The Core Team or some other representative group could decide on the number of representatives to sit on the Decisioning Team from each stakeholder group. Then it could work with each group to elect, say, twice as many nominees as its designated number. Finally, it could develop a set of criteria for selecting representatives and alternates, and could apply those criteria to the elected nominees. Criteria might include such considerations as open-mindedness, flexibility of thinking, group-process skills, post-industrial mindset, and interpersonal conflicts with other nominees.

Open Invitation
This is perhaps the most common form of "selection" for school teams. Generally in the form of an open letter to parents, an announcement in a newsletter or newspaper, or an announcement in a PTA meeting, the open invitation is really not a selection procedure, but a solicitation of all who are interested. The drawback here is that the team may be unbalanced or too large. In addition, you cannot control for personality conflicts or work styles. However, this does have the advantage of clear perceptions of fairness and openness on the part of the school. The Core Team or some other representative group could:

1. Gain approval/consensus for using the open invitation selection process.
2. Identify appropriate publications, meetings, and venues for recruiting potential members.
3. Design, write, and gain approval of advertising, fliers, etc. to publicize opportunities to serve on the Decisioning Team.
4. Run ads, post fliers, attend meetings, share information with potentially interested candidates for the team.
5. Collect all names of potential candidates.
6. Confirm participation with all candidates.
7. Convene a meeting of all applicants for both teams to describe roles and responsibilities and gain final commitment to participation.

Continued
Exclusive Selection

Exclusive selection is similar to Open Invitation except that some people who have applied for team membership are excluded. A group called the selection delegation recruits potential members and then takes time with the applications and rates them according to certain criteria. If a candidate is not interested, s/he should be encouraged to say so at the time of selection, so you might gain the commitment of another candidate.

1. Core Team gains approval/consensus for using the exclusive selection process.
2. Core Team collaborates to identify, recruit and select selection delegate members, keeping in mind that all stakeholder groups should approve of the delegates and that the delegates should not include promising candidates for the new team.
3. Convene delegate members to brainstorm potential team members. Be sure the delegation is aware of any information that would be helpful to the process from focus groups and individual profiles resulting from earlier events.
4. Based on initial brainstorming, the delegation creates a short list of potential team members.
5. The delegation considers the most important criteria for members—team balance, etc. (see Carr & Reigeluth, 1993) and creates a slate of candidates.
6. The delegation presents the slate to the school leadership, the Core Team, and all other stakeholder groups that should be consulted.
7. Delegates most familiar with candidates contact them to gain their commitment to serve.
8. The delegation re-works the slate based on acceptance/rejection of the initial slate of candidates, and delegates contact the added candidates to gain their commitment to serve. (Repeat Steps 5-7 until the team is full.)

Solicited Inclusion

Certain stakeholders may be solicited without all the effort of considering applications, balance and selection criteria. In these cases, a group typically calls several community members they feel would be "good" on the team and invites them to a meeting. This unfortunately has very few advantages because there is neither the perception of complete openness in membership nor is there the systematic approach to selection that would create balance and appropriate size for the team. Therefore, we do not recommend this approach.

4. Study and adapt the selection process.

Review materials and literature on how best to carry out the selection process you've chosen. Then adapt (redesign) the selection process for your context. You may want to create briefing sheets for the materials that you review in depth for use with school leaders in helping them to understand the selection process.

Sample readings:


(Time: 1 week)
5. **Form the team.**

Now that you have an appropriate selection process for the Decisioning Team, that process should be implemented. Personal contact is the best way to foster commitment to the team. Such an contact needs to emphasize the importance of committed participation, the nature of their service, and time requirements. Once the members have agreed to serve, their names should be shared as widely as possible through as many community venues as possible, including newsletters, newspapers, and community-access television. A celebration "coming out" event may be used to introduce all members of the Decisioning Team to the community and invite people to communicate frequently with them.

(Time: 1-2 weeks)

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**Potential Problems with the Process**

The following are some problems you may anticipate in conducting this process:

- If the members of the Core Team are tired or burned out, you may find it difficult to convince them of the importance of their continued participation in the Design and Decisioning Teams. With a loss of all members of the Core Team comes a loss of expertise and culture that will be difficult to overcome and recreate.

- If the Core Team has a very strong identity and culture, they may want to maintain an identity after their expansion into a larger team. This is not advised because it creates the appearance of an elite in-group that runs counter to the values underlying a systemic change process. Also, it will inevitably undermine the work of the expanded team(s).

- Whatever teams are formed, you will have to make sure their views are taken seriously and acted on. It may be difficult to convince school leadership that this sort of empowerment is necessary. The most common difficulty here is the sense that those who have expertise in education "know best" and therefore, while input is acceptable from community members, real power in the process is more difficult to accept. Emphasize the collaborative nature of the process and assure school leaders that this collaboration is necessary, since community support is important to the longevity of the innovation. It is not either/or—either the school leaders have control, or the community has control. Both can join in creating the sort of school that will meet the community's needs.

- While many of the selection process options are viable, some of them are less than systemic, and you (the facilitator) may find that you are engaged in some process that will not be guided by this text. This is an important decision point, and if you find the school leadership or the context totally unfriendly to systemic change and stakeholder participation, you may wish to either re-negotiate your work with the district, withdraw from the project, or consult an additional/alternate text to guide your efforts.
Understandings

Given the importance of understanding the need for, and nature of, systemic change, we offer the following suggestions for specific understandings you may wish to work on. Again, please do not feel you have to use these understandings, and we hope you will identify other understandings you think are important. We encourage you to carefully consider why you are accepting, rejecting, or adding each understanding.

A. Expanding the Team

What alternatives do we have in terms of teams in this district?
Is everyone from the Core Team willing to continue on the Decisioning Team?

B. Selection Model Options

What alternatives do we have in choosing team members?
What are the advantages/disadvantages of using each of these alternative models?
What might be the community perception of each of these alternative models?
What sorts of team differences are likely to result from these alternative models?

C. Selection Processes

How is each selection process actually carried out?
Is this a systemic selection process? Why or why not?