
Spackenkill USFD Shared Decision Making

A Framework for Our School and Community

Spackenkill UFSD District Council
June 25, 2013
Version 1.0

Purpose:

“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” (100.11 Regulations of the Commissioner of Education).

Spackenkill empowers the representatives of each of the stakeholder groups in our district to work together to improve the effectiveness of our schools and increase student achievement. We believe that by giving stakeholders a voice and working collaboratively, we can accomplish much greater feats than any one of us could individually.

At the core of our shared decision making plan is our district’s mission, vision, and values:

Mission:

Spackenkill schools, inspired by a tradition of excellence and a spirit of continuous improvement, is committed to empowering students to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Vision:

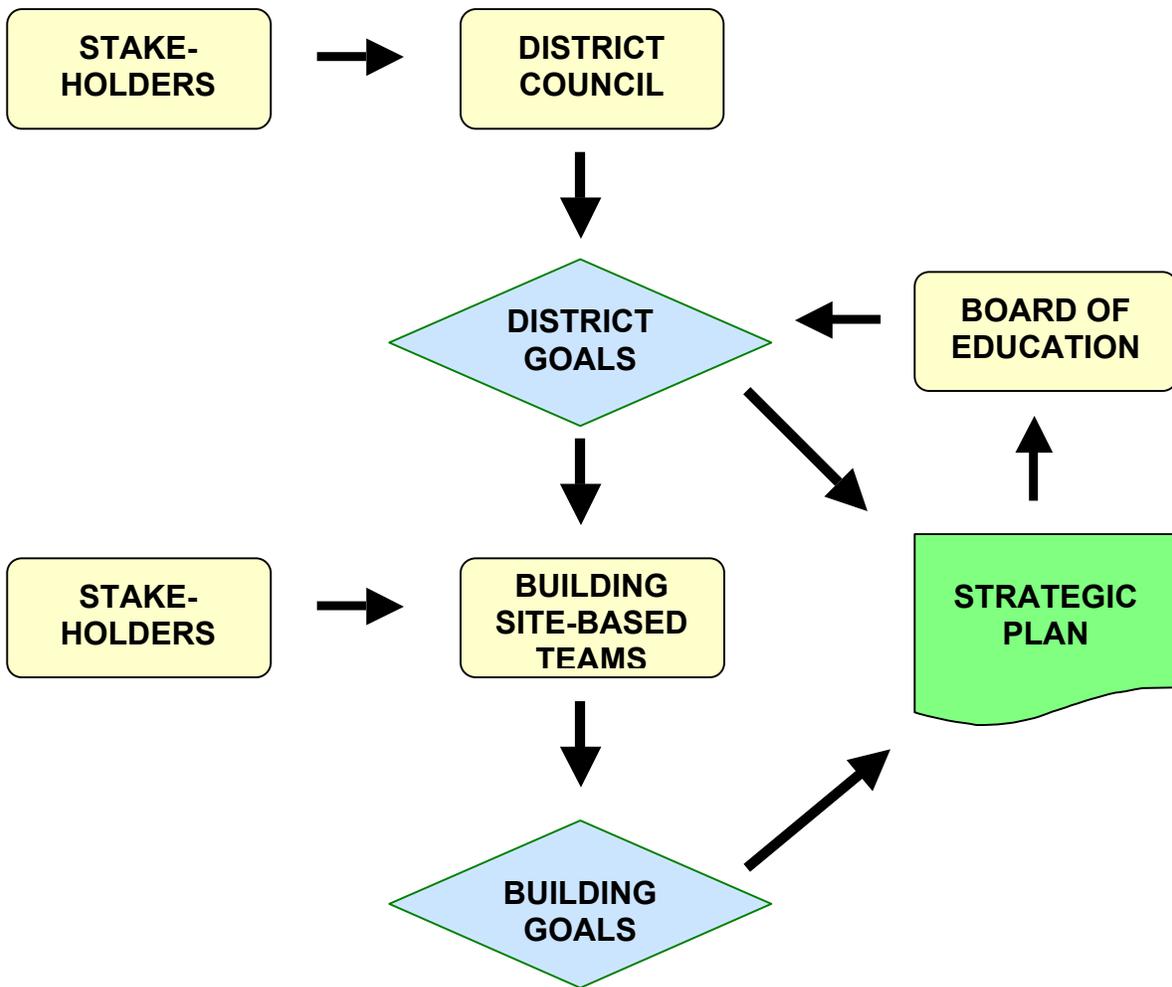
All Spackenkill graduates will be lifelong learners who are inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global society.

Values:

Tradition	Character	Knowledge
Communication	Adaptability	Creativity
Community support	Collaboration	Critical thinking/problem solving
Excellence	Courage	Global awareness
Fiscal responsibility	Curiosity	Leadership
Leadership	Honesty	Literacy
Loyalty	Integrity	Reflection
Pride	Leadership	Rigor
	Perseverance	Skills (academic, social, interpersonal, communication)
	Resilience	Wellness
	Respect	
	Responsibility	
	Risk-taking	
	Sportsmanship	

These three components help provide the framework for our district strategic

plan. The District Council sets district goals, which are approved by the Board of Education and then incorporated into the strategic plan. This plan sets the direction for each building's Site-Based Team and any other shared-based team that is established by our district administration or Board of Education. Specific building goals are then incorporated in the strategic plan and approved by the Board of Education. Decisions and actions of shared decision making teams should be consistent with and support our district's strategic plan.



Shared Decision Making Team Responsibilities:

The team members are expected to commit their time to researching topics, studying data, and reviewing examples of the industry's best practice. The team members formulate decisions by *consensus* and are *accountable* for their decision.

Consensus: working together toward goals within an atmosphere of trust. Although the final decision is not necessarily everyone's first choice, enough individuals are comfortable with the decision, can support it in a positive

manner, and no one would create obstacles to prevent or hinder the resulting action.

The team works through their decisions and actions based on consensus resulting in better decisions, better implementation and better group relationships.

Consensus Building Tips:

Ensure everyone clearly understands the issue.
Ask each member to state his/her opinion.
Suggest a compromise; ask everyone to react to it.
Provide time for everyone to reflect on the issue and then begin discussion again.
Leave the issue and return to it later.
Assign subcommittees to gather more information and/or conduct research.
Consult an outside resource; expert on the topic.
Assign subcommittees to reach consensus involving those with the strongest views.
Create a contradictory statement to refocus the discussion and identify real concerns.
Ask another person to assume the role of chair.
Leave it out; maybe there's no consensus to be reached.

Adapted from Elmsford UFSD Plan for Participation Shared Decision Making, 2013-2015 and Brunswick Central School District Share Decision-Making Plan.

Consensus Building Phrases:

Let's begin by getting a reaction from everyone.
Let me summarize what I hear you saying.
Are all of you comfortable with that recommendation?
Let me repeat what I think I heard you say.
Let me ask ...
Can everyone live with this decision?
Is anyone uncomfortable with this decision?
Does everyone feel that they've had an opportunity to express an opinion?
Let's take 5 minutes to reevaluate our positions and prepare a statement in writing to share with others.
Let's think on this question overnight and discuss it when we are fresh in the morning.

From Elmsford UFSD Plan for Participation Shared Decision Making, 2013-2015

Accountable: It is imperative to the success of shared decision making teams that each member recognizes the role that his/her position, decisions, and actions (as individuals and as a team) have on our district's effectiveness and our students' success. Each member is expected:

- to be in attendance at meetings consistently, on time, and prepared
- bring input forward from the stakeholders he/she represents
- participate in discussions openly and honestly, while representing the stakeholders he/she represents as opposed to his/her personal agenda
- put students first
- show respect toward others
- research topics; study data

- remain open-minded, positive and flexible
- communicate proposals, decisions and actions in a timely manner to the stakeholders whom he/she represents
- be able to explain and support the rationale for consensus shared decisions
- constructively act on consensus shared decisions.

If a team member is not fulfilling his/her commitment, it will be recommended that he/she be replaced by another stakeholder whose unit they represent. Each stakeholder unit should have a procedure in place by which it selects a new representative.

Shared Decision Making Team Roles:

The Board of Education

The Board of Education is accountable to the registered voters and the students of our district for the outcomes produced by the decisions it shares in making. The Board is responsible for providing the necessary resources and support to the teams in order that their decisions and actions are effective. The Board is responsible to communicate decisions and outcomes at BOE meetings in a timely fashion.

Superintendent

The Superintendent is accountable to the Board of Education but also to the students, the district personnel, and to the community at large. She answers questions regarding the legality of collaborative decisions. She is responsible for providing each building principal with the resources, support and flexibility in order that the team's decisions and actions are effective.

Principals

The Principal is responsible for providing leadership and guidance for the team. He/she is responsible to the Superintendent, the Board of Education, and the Administrators' collective bargaining unit. He/she is responsible for creating a climate of trust and respect in which all stakeholders can participate effectively.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible to the Principal, the Superintendent, the Board of Education and the Teachers' collective bargaining unit. They are responsible for obtaining input from and reporting status to their colleagues as well as understanding and supporting team decisions. They help establish a climate

of trust and respect in which all stakeholders can participate effectively.

Support Staff

Support staff members are accountable to the Principal, the Superintendent, the Board of Education, and their collective bargaining unit and/or colleagues where no collective bargaining unit exists. They are responsible for obtaining input from and reporting status to their collective bargaining unit and/or colleagues in a timely fashion as well as understanding and supporting team decisions.

Parents

Parents are selected to serve by volunteering or referred by the PTA. They are responsible for obtaining input from and reporting status to the PTA, their peers, the team, students, and the community at large in a timely fashion as well as understanding and supporting team decisions.

Students

Students are responsible to the members of the student body and will communicate through the Student Government, their grade level advisors and their class president. They are responsible for obtaining input from and reporting status to their peers in a timely fashion as well as understanding and supporting team decisions.

Community Representative

Community members (preferably without school-age students) are selected to serve by volunteering or being referred. They are responsible for obtaining input from and reporting status to the community at large in a timely fashion as well as understanding and supporting team decisions.

District Council:

The District Council is a shared decision making team whose members are responsible for this document as well as the content of the district goals portion of Spackenkill's strategic plan. This council also convenes quarterly (or more frequently on an as-needed basis) to make decisions and to take action regarding district-wide issues.

The structure of the District Council is as follows:

Team Members	Length of Service*
1 Superintendent	Infinite
2 Principals (elementary / secondary)	One 2-year term; one 3-year term with term lengths swapping between elementary and secondary school principals.
2 Teachers	One 2-year term; one 3-year term. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
1 Support Staff	One 2-year term under the condition that a Support Staff union member volunteers; otherwise, this position is not required to be filled.
4 Parents	Two 2-year terms; two 3-year terms. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
1 HS Student Government President	For the length of his/her term as student government president.
2 High School Students (preferably one upperclassman and one underclassman)	One 2-year term; one 3-year term. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
1 Community Representative	One 3-year term with the last year overlapping with a new community member.
* Recognizing that circumstances might impact the lengths of service specified, term limits might need to be adjusted. Any adjustment should consider the intent of these term limits: to minimize disruption, to create smooth transitions and maintain some continuity, but also to prevent exceptionally long service terms (except for the Superintendent, of course) in order to give others an opportunity to participate.	

Each year the members on the council will determine who will assume the role of chair and who will record the minutes. The Superintendent forwards the agenda and meeting minutes to each of the council members and posts the agenda and minutes to the Spackenkill district website on a timely basis.

District Council meetings are open to the public. Comments may be accepted selectively, but in general the stakeholders serving on the council act as the representatives. Guests may be invited by the council to participate especially when expertise is needed for a specific topic.

Building Site-Based Team Meetings:

The following table shows the composition of our building-level Site-Based Teams. In general, this is the composition with the minimum number of representatives we prefer for any additional shared based decision making teams that are established.

Team Members (minimum)	Length of Service*
1 Principal	Infinite
2 Teachers	One 2-year term; one 3-year term. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
1 Support Staff	One 2-year term under the condition that a Support Staff union member volunteers; otherwise, this position is not required to be filled.
2 Parents	Two 2-year terms; two 3-year terms. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
2 High School Students (on the HS Site-Based Team)	One 2-year term; one 3-year term. 2-year terms are replaced by individuals assuming 3-year terms and vice versa.
* Recognizing that circumstances might impact the lengths of service specified, term limits might need to be adjusted. Any adjustment should consider the intent of these term limits: to minimize disruption, to create smooth transitions and maintain some continuity, but also to prevent exceptionally long service terms (except for the building principal, of course) in order to give others an opportunity to participate.	

It is expected that Building Site-Based Teams will meet on a monthly basis (or more frequently as-needed) to make decisions and to take action regarding building-specific issues.

Each Site-Based Team annually determines who will assume the role of chair and who will record the minutes. The principal should not necessarily serve as the chair. In fact, teams may find having another team member in this position balances the group dynamics and creates an environment where all members feel equally empowered.

The agenda and minutes for each Site-Based Team are posted on the Spackenkill district website each month and on a timely basis. The minutes are also published on boarddocs as a monthly attachment to the Board of Education consent agenda and made available in hardcopy at monthly Board of Education public meetings.

Site-Based Team meetings are open to the public. Comments may be accepted selectively, but in general it is expected that the stakeholders serving on the building's Site-Based Team act as the representatives. Guests may be invited by the team to participate especially when expertise is needed for a specific topic.

Principles Guiding the Shared Decision Making Process:

Shared decision making is an ongoing process that involves changing the way schools have been traditionally run and impacts the roles and relationships of everyone in the school community. It is expected these teams will work on

issues that are meaningful and impact the educational process rather than simply addressing only trivial subjects that have virtually no impact.

With decision making authority comes the responsibility that each team member comes prepared and ready to participate in the consensus decision making process. Decisions are to be data-driven and research-based. Decisions must conform to the New York State Common Core Learning Standards and fall within the parameters of law and district policy. All decisions must be communicated to the Board of Education on a monthly basis at BOE meetings and to the Spackenkill community (via, but need not be limited to, the Spackenkill website).

Spackenkill believes that providing the opportunity to have each stakeholder group represented in decisions that impact our district, the more sound our schools will be fiscally and educationally. With stakeholders supporting key initiatives, the more successful Spackenkill will be.

Shared Decision Making Topics:

Outside of the authorities that are granted by law to Boards of Education, the NYS Board of Regents, the Commissioner of Education, the collective bargaining units according to the provisions of the negotiated contract, or that fall under the responsibilities of the Superintendent, shared decision making teams are empowered to decide and take action on all other subjects, including but not limited to:

- Building Goals – each site-based team takes the district goals and develops goals they wish to achieve for the school year using the Strategic Plan as a guide.
- Budgets – staffing needs, instructional recommendations and facility needs for an individual school.
- Community Involvement and Relations
- Cooperative Planning
 - curriculum (grouping, interdisciplinary, etc.)
 - facility maintenance
 - instructional materials
 - professional/staff development
 - student assessment
 - student discipline
 - textbook selection
 - use of community resources
- Operational Efficiencies and Cost Effectiveness
- Personnel Selection – each site-based screens, interviews, and recommends final candidates to the Superintendent.
- The Safety, Health and Caring of Schools
- Student Engagement and Performance

- Workforce Engagement

Document: Biennial Review

Once every other year, the members of shared decision making teams must assess the success of their process. This assessment must be based on data pertaining to improvements in student achievement and stakeholder beliefs about their level of involvement. The members of the District Council analyze this feedback to determine if any changes should be made to our process and must update this document accordingly.

Note: Districts are required to keep the results of the biennial review on file and to submit information about the review to the State Education Department.

Resources:

Brunswick Central School District Share Decision-Making Plan

http://www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us/district/district_documents/Shared_Decision_Making_Plan_revised_10.09.pdf

Elmsford UFSD Plan for Participation: Shared Decision Making, 2013-2015

http://www.elmsd.org/district/forms/plan_for_participation_2013-2015.pdf

ERIC Digest 87 April 1994

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/3308/digest087.pdf?sequence=1>

Gouverneur Central School District's Shared Decision Making Plan

<http://gouverneurcentralschool.org/administration/docs/sharedDecisionMakingPlanGCS2012.pdf>

NYSED Part 100 Regulations: 100.11 Participation of parents and teachers in school-based planning and shared decision-making

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/10011.html>

SEDL: Advancing Research Improving Education

<http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues14.html>

Spackenkill UFSD Collaborative Decision-Making (October 1993)

Spackenkill UFSD Strategic Plan (November 5, 2012)

Wells Central School District Shared Decision Making

wellscsd.com/shared_decision_making.rtf