

**Binghamton City School District**

**Plan for School-based Planning and Shared  
Decision-making**

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021

## **2016-2017 Excellence in Academics Expansion Committee**

Dr. Tonia Thompson, Superintendent  
Karry Mullins, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Budget  
Michele Rozen, Kindergarten Teacher/Woodrow Wilson & BTA President  
Thomas Anschutz, Social Studies Teacher, West Middle School  
Milan Brutvan, Community Member  
Jennifer Taylor, BHS/ PTSA President  
Joe Gasior, Board of Education member  
Roxie Oberg, Principal, BHS  
Tim Simonds, Principal, East Middle School  
Suzanne Thomas, Principal, Benjamin Franklin School  
Sara Carr, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers/Thomas Jefferson School  
Virginia Ousterout, Kindergarten Teacher/Calvin Coolidge  
Jackie Coleman, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Teacher/MacArthur School  
Sherri Tucker, 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA Teacher, East Middle School  
Carla Gusefski, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Benjamin Franklin School  
Carolyn Wilczynski, Science Teacher, Binghamton High School  
Reiley Evans, Parent, Woodrow Wilson School

## **Rationale**

The district is committed to collaboration on a broader scale which decentralizes decision-making and places each school building as the locus of decision-making and change. Involvement of parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, board of education members, students and community ensures a broader view of what students should know and accomplish as they learn and grow in our schools. The Board of Education will inform and support the district's compliance with state and federal guidelines. The following plan regarding shared decision-making in our district addresses the requirements of Commissioner's Regulation 100.11 as developed by the Binghamton City School District's Excellence in Academics Committee and adopted by the Board of Education.

## **Historical Perspective**

In 1991, the Binghamton City School District's Excellence in Academics Committee (EIA) began working in cooperation with the school districts' 10 buildings to establish the implementation of shared decision-making in accordance with the Commissioner's regulation. The committee believed a truly collaborative document could not be created without allowing each individual building the opportunity to establish its own working document. Furthermore, it was apparent all of the buildings desired training in consensus decision-making, in group functioning, and in creating working visions. Training was initiated with Ann Martin from the School of Labor Relations at Cornell University, and from NEW, Broome-Tioga BOCES, and other sources.

Each building shared-decision making team was charged to develop a site-based decision making building plan which identified its vision, organizational structure, decision making method, conflict resolution procedures, and the scope of the educational issues subject to cooperative planning and shared decision-making. Each plan was reviewed by the EIA Committee as to its compliance with the Commissioner's regulation. The EIA Committee proceeded to develop the district plan, which encompasses all school buildings plans, and is based on the collaborative efforts of each school.

During the late 1990's through 2012, training and facilitating continued through Sean Brady and his company, Prism Decision-making, were engaged in providing an annual opportunity in consensus building and school improvement plan development. These plans were tied to other state requirements aligned to state and federal accountability rules. In 2014, training continued through a consultant from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory on Shared Leadership Team framework, that incorporated current research based practices on the roles and responsibilities of member of a team leading the work around school improvement.

In 2016, the district endeavored to align its current shared decision making practices with requirements of Commissioner's Regulation 100.11. The Excellence in Academics Committee (EIA) chartered a focus group, an "EIA Expansion" group, for this purpose. As for the portions of the plan that relate to parental or community stakeholder involvement, it was the EIA Expansion group, consisting of the interim superintendent of schools, administrators selected by the district's administrative bargaining organization, teachers selected by the teachers' collective bargaining organization, parents selected by school-related parent organizations, and board of education members who met during the 2016/2017 school year and discussed components of the plan and

its implementation through the district. The portions of the district plan that provide for participation of teachers and/or administrators are developed with consideration given to their respective collectively bargained contracts with the board of education, which have been incorporated into this plan.

## **Overview**

In accordance with Commissioner's Regulations 100.11, the Binghamton City School District shared-decision making plan will address the following:

- The manner and extent of the involvement of all parties.
- The educational issues subject to cooperative planning and shared decision-making at the building level.
- The means by which all parties are held accountable for their decisions.
- The process by which disputes about educational issues being decided are resolved at the local level.
- The means and standards by which the parties evaluate improvement in student achievement.
- The manner by which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision-making are coordinated with the overall plan.

This plan shall be adopted by resolution of the board of education after consultation with and full participation by the designated representatives of the administrators, teachers, and parents, and after seeking endorsement of the plan by such designated representatives. This plan shall be made available to the public and reviewed biennially by the Excellence in Academics Committee and submitted to the board of education for approval prior to reaffirming the plan to the Commissioner. Each building shall establish a site specific shared decision making plan (Attachment A) that identifies the process by which issues are addressed and decisions relevant to that school are made.

## **Definitions and Roles**

Key terms and roles relevant to this Plan are defined as follows:

- Excellence in Academics Committee: The district's team charged to promote School-Based Planning and Shared-Decision Making in compliance with Commissioner's Regulation 100.11, responsible to monitor and support the work of the individual Building Teams.
- Building Team: A school-based decision-making team. Each school will establish and maintain such team. Team structure, participants, and selection process are

further discussed in the section below titled “The Manner and Extent of the Involvement of All Parties.”

- Students: Students who are in attendance in the building, as deemed appropriate.
- Parents: A parent or guardian that is not a member of another constituent group and has a child attending the school.
- Community Stakeholder: A community representative that has an existing relationship with the building.
- Teachers: Teaching and teaching assistant faculty currently assigned to the building.
- Support Staff: Clerical, custodians, aides and monitors, and food service staff currently assigned to the building.
- Administrators: Administrators assigned to the building.

### **The Manner and Extent of the Involvement of All Parties**

The Excellence in Academics (EIA) Committee is a district team charged to promote School-Based Planning and Shared-Decision Making in compliance with Commissioner’s Regulation 100.11, responsible to monitor and support the work of the individual Building Teams. The Excellence in Academics Committee consists of eight (8) members: Central Office, Building Principal, two teachers (identified by Binghamton Teachers Association); two parents, one Board of Education member and one community member. The EIA Committee will resolve disputes or conflicts that cannot be resolved by the Building Team.

The following represents the EIA Committee’s guidelines for each Building Team.

Each Building Team must include teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians. In addition to, membership may come from the constituent groups listed below:

- Board of Education
- Excellence in Academics Committee
- Community Stakeholders
- CSEA (Civil Service Employees Association)
- Paraprofessional CSEA
- Students (as deemed appropriate)

Each Building Team, led by the building principal, will develop a building shared decision making plan (See Attachment A) for the school and, through its plan, will identify the number of people representing each constituency, how these people are chosen, length of terms, participation requirements and the replacement procedures. The membership of the Building Team should reflect a balanced composition of the school community.

Restructuring schools involves not just the schools, the students, the staff, and the Board of Education, but the larger school community of parents, community members, and business leaders. Each member needs to be cognizant of the level of participation which is necessary to produce productive shared decision-making teams. Open communication and difficult conversations are often necessary to facilitate organizational change. Teams should use each

other as resources, be constructive, and respect individual perspectives while being solution oriented. Effective communication from each building team is essential. Therefore, a mechanism for effective communication, including distribution of minutes and the posting of agendas, meeting dates, and locations, should be delineated in each building.

The scheduling of meetings should be flexible to accommodate the concerns of each constituent group. The EIA committee recommends that each team meet at least once per month. More frequent meetings are encouraged.

Each Building Team shall submit its Plan for the upcoming school year to the EIA Committee by September 1st of the preceding school year.

### **Accountability**

Each Building Team is responsible for developing procedures for holding all parties accountable. Since the purpose of shared decision-making is the improvement of learning for students and improvement in professional practice, all decisions made should be evaluated in terms of these objectives. Communication and feedback are essential elements of accountability.

Accountability measures that may be used by Building Teams are:

- Preparation and distribution of meeting minutes to include attendees, topics discussed, and outcomes/decisions.
- Participation rates of members.
- Established communication chain to ensure all stakeholders are informed and involved.

Each building team will identify how success will be measured based on the types of initiatives put into place.

Some indicators to look for in assessing results are the following:

- Improved student learning outcomes (e.g. behaviors, attitudes, values, knowledge, attendance)
- Improved professional practice through participation in staff development
- Identification of successes
- Maximizing internal and external resources
- Success rate of graduates as measured by college acceptance or securing meaningful employment
- Free flow of communication and feedback from all constituencies

The self-assessment of each building is the mechanism by which each team evaluates what they are doing, what they have implemented, and what they can improve. There are various methods to assess continuous improvement. Such methods should be used to promote a sequential plan for implementing change within the organization.

Continuing self-assessment results in an annual report from each building team to the District EIA Committee by June 30. EIA will review the reports and keep them on file and make such reports available for public record.

### **Educational Issues Subject to Cooperative Planning**

These areas shall include but may not be limited to:

- Curriculum implementation
- Classroom practices
- Resource allocation
- Staff development
- Budget development
- Waivers to teacher contract (See Attachment B)
- School Climate
- Extended Day programming
- School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP)

Each Building Team will prioritize issues consistent with the goals of the Board of Education and the Mission and Philosophy Statement of the Binghamton City School District, analyzing the situation, planning how the work will be done, and completing a yearly self-assessment.

The following areas are not subject to shared decision making by the Building Teams:

- issues relating to law, rule or regulation
- personnel issues
- health issues
- emergency response related safety issues
- ethical issues
- civil rights issues
- issues covered by the negotiated agreements unless there is a sign-off by all parties such as length of school day, salary or compensation policies, or personnel matters
- issues requiring financial resources in excess of the amount approved by the Board of Education
- issues affecting other buildings

### **The Process by which Disputes about Education Issues Will be Resolved at the Local Level**

Each Building Team has developed a process by which disputes centering on educational issues will be resolved. Various approaches include the following:

- Gather more information which would increase knowledge about a subject enabling them to make a decision.
- Bring in a neutral mediator and try again to achieve consensus.
- Brainstorm alternative solutions.
- Share the problem with the individual school community for alternate solutions, input, or a majority vote.

- Choose, by consensus, to take a vote with 2/3 of the building team needed to resolve the dispute.
- Decide to have each constituent group vote. The majority of each consistent group will determine the one vote for their group, thereby determining if a decision can be reached.

Any dispute that cannot be resolved by the Building Team is brought to the EIA Committee. The EIA Committee will discuss and provide recommendation to the Building Team who will then reconvene to resolve. If the Building Team cannot arrive at a resolution, the EIA Committee will make the final decision.

### **The Means and Standards by which the Parties Will Evaluate Improvement in Student Achievement**

The EIA Committee and the Building Teams will continue to evaluate and monitor student instructional progress using the academic profile/targeting process. This process will include student learning outcomes and standard of excellence, identified by the administrators and teachers of the district. To the extent required, the process will also include measures as articulated under New York State Education Department's accountability system.

### **Academic Standing and Target Setting**

An academic standing and targeting process has been in use in the District since 1981 and has successfully helped in monitoring and improving student achievement. The academic standing has been represented in different forms, but most recently as a district Data Dashboard. The Dashboard includes performance trends across different measures and includes both local and State data. The entire set of academic data flows from two major elements:

#### *1. State-identified education goals and learning outcomes.*

Included here are such things as Regents Examination, New York State Assessments, Graduation rates, and State Program Evaluation Tests.

#### *2. Locally identified education goals and learning outcomes.*

Included here are locally determined standards such as the expectation that \*\*\*% of students will pass Regents Exams as well as meet other locally established mastery levels. In addition, other student descriptors are also to be found here: student retentions, student attendance, postgraduate student plans, and data on student suspensions and student disciplinary hearings.

A District Planning Team composed of at least 20 will be established and serve as a group of representative stakeholders from the community. This team will be composed of community members from Higher Education and local business, Board members, the Superintendent, Administrators, Teachers, Aides/Monitors/Clerks, parents, and secondary students. The District

Planning Team will be responsible for reviewing performance data, survey results, and/or feedback received by focus groups, resulting in time-bound goals. These goals will move forward to the Board of Education for review and/or revision and adoption as district goals.

Academic target setting takes place at the building level in the form of an improvement plan. The goals that are identified in each building's plan are to be aligned to the district goals as adopted by the Board of Education. Each building team will be responsible for the creation of the school's improvement plan, also known as the School's Comprehensive Education Plan under Title I regulations. The plan will outline the building's measurable goals, strategies and activities that will be used to achieve the goals.

### **Manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision-making will be coordinated**

There are a variety of State and Federal requirements for the involvement and engagement of parents in planning and decision-making. This includes such areas as: compensatory education, occupational education, health education, and special education.

It is the district's intent to exceed parental involvement requirements mandated by State and Federal regulations. In order that each Building Team and the EIA Committee is kept apprised of progress in each area, building teams shall share planned parent events in the fall and in the spring with the EIA Committee, to include the following:

- Parental involvement programs being planned, implemented or currently underway.
- Activities being undertaken through these initiatives
- Dates of planned meetings/events
- Successes and plans for adjustments

In order to ensure adequate communication between parent involvement efforts and Building Teams, Building Teams should regularly place on their agenda opportunities for parent representatives to share planned parent events.

Parents will be encouraged to be active participants of Building Teams via school PTAs, Booster Clubs, community announcements, school newsletters and personal invitations. Parent representatives on building and district teams are chosen by their own organization to serve designated terms.

### **Summary**

The district, with the full support of the Board of Education, believes the local school is where excellence must be achieved. In accordance with this belief, our shared decision-making plan involves those closest to the children in making the educational decisions for the school. Because we feel individuals responsible for implementing decisions should have a voice in determining those decisions, the parents, school staff and the community have been charged with this responsibility through the creation of this district plan. The district is confident, through this process, that the goals for the students of the Binghamton City School District will be achieved.

## 10 Steps to Guide Shared Leadership Team and Planning Process

1. The following document is to be completed and reviewed annually. The Excellence in Academics Committee requests that the completed document be included in each building's Faculty Handbook and forwarded to the EIA Committee prior to the start of each school year. Additionally, it should be referenced during each building's September Faculty meeting.

1. Who is on the team? List your team members:

2. Additionally, indicate how members were solicited. Consider fair representation to serve on the committee.

3. What leadership traits will we collectively represent? List below. (See attached list of leadership qualities as a guide.)

Leadership Trait	Description

4. List your norms that will guide each of your Shared Leadership Meetings below:



**6. Agenda and Meeting Minute format** – Each building will use the district-wide adopted templates, which includes: the team’s norms, outcomes for the meeting, the team’s responsibilities, the meeting roles, and communication chain message. (See attached template and example.) **Indicate here how the agenda and minutes will be communicated to stakeholders and determine the message: (Think key ideas, decisions, strategies, improvement initiative etc.)**

**7. Use a timed agenda: timed agendas move a group forward and keep a group from getting off track. If the time is not enough, the team has to reach consensus to extend the time. (See example.)**

Sample

Agenda for Weekly LT Meeting

8:00-8:05 Review Norms

8:05-8:15 Connecting Activity/Celebrations

8:15-8:30 Item#1\_\_\_\_\_

8:30-8:45 Item#2\_\_\_\_\_

8:45-9:00 Closing

Next Steps:

Communication Chain Message:

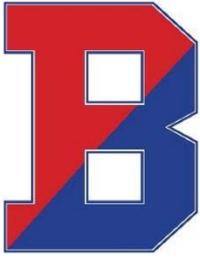
Process Observer Report on Norms



Following is a list of how decisions may be made as a team and with the staff. When a decision is made, how it was made should be noted in the minutes of the meeting by including the name of the method used.

Making Decision Methods	When Used	Who is Involved in Making the Decision
<b>Command</b>	The issue is seen as “low-stakes” and staff prefers to let someone else make the decision <b>OR</b> the staff has high levels of trust in the person or group (e.g., the principal, the implementation team) making the decision. Additional people would not add to the quality of the decision. <b>OR</b> An “outside force” (e.g., the state education agency, the district) that has authority over the school makes the decision.	One person or group without input from others
<b>Consult</b>	The person or group making the decision seeks input from experts or representatives of the population in order to gain ideas and support for the decision.  Use this method when many people will be affected, when you can gather information from various groups relatively easily, when people care about the decision, and when there are many options, some of them controversial.	One person or group with input from others. This is not consensus.
<b>Consensus*</b>	This method is used when unity and high-quality decisions are desired. Use this method when the issues are high stakes, have a great impact, are complex or when everyone must support the final choice.	A group (representative or inclusive); everyone comes to an agreement and then supports the final decision
<b>Vote</b>	People do not want to spend too much time making the decision or the issue is not that “weighty.” (This is not a good method if the stakes are high in a school because it leads to division.) There are a number of good options from which to choose and people agree to support the final choice.	A group of people (representative or inclusive); an agreed-upon percentage swings the decision

*Adapted from These four types of decision making and their explanations are drawn from Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler's Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High. See pages 165-166.*



## Shared Leadership Team Meeting

Date

Time

### Highlights from Meeting:

Procedural Norms	Behavioral Norms
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will establish a structured agenda, including defined roles, outcomes, next steps (3 talking points as a summary) and meeting dates.</li> <li>2. We will begin meetings on time and end on time.</li> <li>3. We will use Fist to Five to reach consensus and make decisions collaboratively.</li> <li>4. Recorder will share minutes with ALL faculty and staff (via google drive) and post in the teachers' room</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will keep students and student achievement at the forefront of all decisions.</li> <li>2. We will be prepared for meetings (reading, materials, data, etc.) and commit to attend all meetings.</li> <li>3. We will respect others' ideas and examine all points of view before reaching consensus.</li> <li>4. We will leave each meeting supporting each other on the decisions that were reached through consensus.</li> <li>5. We will stay focused on the speaker and topic.</li> </ol>

### Roles:

**Co-facilitators:**

**Timekeeper:**

**Process Observer:**

**Recorder:**

<p><b>Facilitator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Manages activities and discussions</li> <li>● Summarizes decisions and discussions</li> <li>● Clarifies issues</li> <li>● Ensures everyone participates</li> <li>● Monitors progress</li> </ul>	<p><b>Time Keeper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitors time of each agenda item</li> <li>● Informs the team of time remaining</li> <li>● Helps team revise times allotted on the agenda as necessary</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recorder:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Captures the key ideas, decisions, assignments of the meeting by taking notes/minutes during the session and revising once the meeting has finished</li> <li>● Distributes the minutes (email, posting)</li> <li>● Minutes include decisions made, ideas shared, important aspects of doing the work of school improvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Process Observer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides feedback to the group on how the members followed the norms</li> <li>● What did the team do well?</li> <li>● What behaviors need to improve for next time?</li> <li>✓ Did everyone participate?</li> <li>✓ Did we stay on task?</li> <li>✓ Were the roles carried out efficiently?</li> </ul>
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### Shared Leadership Responsibilities

*Leadership Trait	Description
<b>Input</b>	<p><b>Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides opportunities for teacher and staff input on all important decisions.</li> <li>● Provides opportunities for teachers and staff to be involved in developing school policies</li> <li>● Uses leadership teams in decision-making</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<p><b>Establishes strong lines of communication with teacher and among students.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is easily accessible to teachers and staff</li> <li>● Develops effective means for teachers and staff to communicate with one another</li> <li>● Maintains open and effective lines of communication with teachers and staff</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b>	<p><b>Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promotes a sense of well-being among teachers and staff</li> <li>● Promotes cohesion among teachers and staff</li> <li>● Develops an understanding of purpose among teachers and staff</li> <li>● Develops a shared vision of what the school could be like</li> <li>● Promotes cooperation among teachers and staff</li> </ul>

**Affirmation**

**Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures.**

- **Systematically and fairly recognizes the accomplishment of teachers.**
- **Systematically and fairly recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of students**
- **Systematically and fairly recognizes the failures of and celebrates the accomplishments of the school as a whole**

**Outcomes/Objectives:**



**Please Bring to Meeting:**



**Setting up for Meeting:**



**Agenda**



**Minutes/Notes**

**Celebrations:**

