
Tips for Effective Council Operations

Council members should recognize and attend to the importance of communication and work to improve their own listening skills.

Council members should have the opportunity to suggest agenda items at each meeting. The LSIC Chair should clarify what is expected of the Council for each item on a meeting's agenda.

Council members need background information concerning laws, policies, and regulations and access to the expertise and experience of central office personnel.

Standard meeting courtesies and norms can be supportive to keeping meeting agendas positive and productive.

Council members should recognize the responsibility to propose suggestions for improving the operation of the school.

Councils should set both long-term and short-term goals, both of which are necessary to bring about substantive school improvement.

Monitoring progress continuously is necessary for councils to evaluate their efforts and progress toward attainment of goals.

Members and Meetings

Each council member is responsible for doing his/her part to make meetings productive.

Between meetings, council members should study the issues and generate possible solutions to problems.

During meetings, they should represent their constituents, yet set aside self or constituent-group interest that interfere with Council goals.

Council members need to listen with open minds and make thoughtful, well-informed decisions.

All Council members need to stick to the meeting agenda- members should present their viewpoints briefly and allow the meeting to move from one agenda item to the next.



Meeting Planning Considerations

Agendas - Most councils make written agendas available to council members and other attendees for each meeting.

Minutes - Minutes taken at the meetings serve as an official record of discussions and decisions. Minutes from previous meetings may be distributed to council members at or before the next meeting.

Correspondence/Announcements - Most councils place correspondence as an agenda item at the beginning of the meeting. Correspondence may include information such as announcements from the central office, reports from foundations, and requests for proposals.

Reports - Reports are a way to present information to the council. A principal's report offers information about school programs and activities. Other reports summarize council committee work.

Committees - Committees are a means of getting work done efficiently. Committee members meet outside of regular council meeting times. They investigate issues, read research, compile their findings, and report recommendations at the regular council meeting. Committees may include members who are not on the council.

Seating Patterns and Meeting Places - Generally, council members sit together at tables that permit them to see and hear each other. Many councils arrange their seats so that audience members can see and hear them. The room should be comfortable and accommodate the size of the audience.

Public Participation - Most councils have an official place on the agenda to hear the concerns of the people, or may invite presentations from non-members.



Problem-Solving Process

Assess Improvement Needs

This step focuses on gathering data to identify areas in need of improvement.

Establish Priorities

After needs assessment results have been analyzed and reported, the improvement team should set priorities by ranking needs according to what must be accomplished.

Develop School Improvement Plans

The team should write an improvement plan for each improvement goal or objective. The plan should specify activities and a timeline to accomplish each objective.

Identify Resources and Support Needs

To implement the improvement plans, support from within and outside the district may be needed.

Create a Time Frame for Improvement Efforts

Timelines provide targets to achieve. However, realistic schedules must be established to avoid frustration and discouragement.

Implement the Improvement Plan

Preparing to implement improvement plans involves creating awareness, setting expectations, assigning roles and responsibilities, and making logistical arrangements.

Monitor and Evaluate Progress

This step determines if the plans implemented attained the improvement objectives. Evaluation requires careful collection of implementation data, clearly defined student outcome measures, and a willingness to impartially assess the success of the improvement plans.



Meeting Participation

Do your homework. Take the time to understand the issues and to anticipate different perspectives. Write down a list of questions you need answered before you can make good decisions.

Put the interests of the school ahead of any self or constituent group interest. You may have been selected because you represent a particular point of view, but this does not mean that you are obligated to look out for the interests of only one type of child, one age group, one program, or one cause.

Be willing to listen and do not make snap decisions. Truly listening requires an open mind and a ready ear. Speak out if it appears that the team might take action without adequate information or discussion.

Attend to others while they are voicing their opinions, sampling interest, or exploring commitments to proposals. Avoid shuffling papers or engaging in side conversations while someone else is talking. Nonverbal expressions can give away how you really feel about a person or an idea. Encourage other members of the team to participate. Interrupt monopolizers and seek the viewpoints of others.

Stick to the issues on the agenda. Avoid bringing up or discussing irrelevant issues. Make your points briefly and move on. Ineffective teams allow members to repeat themselves, digress, reminisce, or needlessly provoke controversy with others. Encourage opportunities for all members to suggest agenda items, and set time limits for discussion of each item on the agenda.

