

Leadership Advisory Team (LAT) FAQ

Can we elect “at large”? Yes, if your bylaws are written that way. However, members should consider how at-large representatives will be able to efficiently and effectively communicate with their constituents. One suggestion is that the teacher members of the LAT identify a specific group of constituents with whom they communicate on a regular basis. The problems of efficient communication and the need to eliminate “yet another meeting” have lead many schools to chose representation by grade level, department or team. You could also consider a combination of the two. *Note:* if you are electing at-large, your bylaws should include the number of representatives to be elected and identify what percentage of votes they must receive to be elected (top-vote-getters, plurality or majority). The bylaws might require those selected to get a majority of votes cast or determine that those teachers receiving the most votes are elected. For example, if you are electing 5 at-large representatives and there are 10 teachers running, then the five teachers receiving the most votes are elected.

If we don’t elect “at large” how do we make sure the membership is representative? Do we ask each team to elect their representative? Again, many schools elect by grade level, depart or team. Doing so eliminates the need to call a special meeting to discuss LAT issues. They can simply be discussed along with other “group” business. You could also choose to elect by planning times, lunch periods, or the wings/floors of a building. The idea is that you want to make communication with constituents *efficient* and *effective*. If you elect by teams then, yes, each team would elect its own representative. A formal vote should be offered in cases were there are multiple teachers wanting to run.

Do we create meeting norms before electing the LAT membership? Because norms are unique to each group and situation, the setting of norms normally comes after the LAT has been elected.

How do we go about establishing the norms – step by step? The truth is all groups develop norms whether they are formalized or not. However, decision-making groups like LAT’S operate best when the group formally develops the norms and enforces them. At their best norms are identified, discussed and mutually agreed to via a consensus model. The question is this: *What agreements do we need to reach as participants in the LAT that will help us work efficiently and effectively in an environment that is safe for all.*

The chair simply begins the conversation and members raise issues/concerns they’d like to have addressed. Members write language that deals with the topic. Then, the group checks for consensus: *Can everyone agree with or at least support this norm?* If someone is not able to agree, the responsibility of the group is to seek understanding. They can either chose to modify the norm to meet the member’s need or drop the norm altogether.

For example, time is always an issue, so a member may state a concern that s/he dislikes meetings that start late. The norm, then, might be that all meetings begin on time at 3:15 and late arriving members are responsible for the information they missed. The principal may be concerned that minutes might go out to the staff that would be incorrect. A norm, therefore, could be that the principal and chair review all minutes before they are distributed, and if there is a disagreement the LAT will decide.

How do we amend the norms in the future? Good norms are working norms. At the end of each meeting the group should ask the question: *How are we doing with honoring our norms.* When norms are violated any member can and should ask the question or state the concern. The group can add, delete or change a norm at any time, as long as there is consensus. Remember, these are not bylaws; they are simply agreements by which we agree to work together.

Can a principal chair the committee or Co-chair the committee along with a teacher? The LAT is primarily a teacher committee and it would be inappropriate for the principal alone to chair it. However, many schools are looking at the co-chair idea and that seems to makes sense to many. In other schools teachers have decided that neither the AR or the principal chair the meetings; they elect a chair.

Can principals appoint their own people to the committee like members of their cabinet or unilaterally say that all counselors and IL’s are members or would be required to attend as observers? No! All members must be elected by their peers to serve on the LAT.

Can teachers who are not LAT members attend the meeting? Generally, meetings should be open unless the LAT votes to close them. But remember, noting destroys trust and confidence more than “secret” meetings. When meetings are open, rules of participation by non-voting members need to be established.

What is the LAT's responsibility to our colleagues? The LAT is a democratically elected representative body. As such each representative has a responsibility to *efficiently* and *effectively* establish *two-way communications* with the identified constituents. **An LAT that makes a decision about which their constituents are not informed or do not support is an LAT that will lack credibility or support.** JCEA's LAT publication gives some ideas regarding how to determine teacher interest and concern about issues coming before the LAT.

Are meetings open? Again yes, unless the LAT votes to go into executive session. Open meetings contribute to trust and support.

How best to distribute information about what goes on in the meetings? Agendas should be communicated in advance of the meeting so members know what's to be discussed. Minutes should be written that briefly explain what happened to each agenda item, as well as who attend the meeting. Minutes are *not* transcriptions and *do not* reflect what people say, only what actions the LAT actually took.

In schools where there are mandatory committee assignments – will service on LAT count or is this additional work? There is nothing that contractually mandates this, but it makes sense. Actually, from a contractual viewpoint, there are no mandated committees, though a principal can assign you work during your 40-hour workweek. All of that, however, is open for action by the LAT.

Are the meetings during the contract week or do they happen on our own time? During the contract week. If the LAT meets outside the 40-hour workweek, comp-time should be given.

If LAT is part of the CDM process, what is collaborative decision making? How do we get start?

Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) is a process in our district as defined by a Memorandum of Understanding in Appendix 3 of the contract. This MOU is very explicit about what CDM is. **At it's core, however, is the notion that all decisions need to be made by consensus, be inclusive, and involve all necessary stakeholders.** Fundamental to the CDM process is that school staffs—by consensus—reach agreement on who (an individual or committee) has the responsibility to make a school decision and what type of decision (collaborative, consultative, or command) is to be made. The end goal is to create a decision making model that clearly defines how decisions are made within the building. By contract LAT is a part of the process. Through the CDM process a school could, by consensus, agree to expand the LAT's decision-making responsibilities beyond those already in the contract.

What kinds of decisions do we get to make on our own after conferring with those we represent? All of those items identified in the contract (teacher directed non-contact days, and how to spend the negotiated \$10,000 for workload relief) and any other item referred or delegated to the LAT by the CDM process.

Our school currently has a cabinet, how is LAT different? The LAT is teacher elected, not appointed by the principal. Through the CDM process schools could differentiate which decisions the cabinet makes and which are made by LAT or other school committees. Again, there is nothing in our contract that gives the principal's cabinet any power or authority to make decisions.

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