

Leadership Advisory Teams: Getting started & keeping going!

In the spring of 2007, JCEA and JPS re-negotiated the nearly 40-year old Liaison Committee process. The new language in Article 20 created the **Leadership Advisory Team (LAT)**, the result of two important conversations. The first was with the administrator's association (JCAA) who felt the former process had a negative connotation and—as a practical reality—did very little problem-solving. The second was with JCEA members who have had significant concerns about the teaching and learning conditions in our schools and wanted an increased role in decision-making.



As a result, the rewritten Article 20 incorporates three important provisions. First, the **LATs are mandatory**. Schools no longer have an option, and principals are encouraged to work with the Association Representative(s) and teachers to create them. Second, **principals are now members of the LAT**, not invited guests to a monthly meeting. The negotiators believed that having principals as members of the team enhanced the ability to solve problems. Third, the new language says the **LAT meets "for the purpose of Collaborative Decision Making."**

With this new language teachers in every school now have the ability to collaborate with their principals on matters that impact teaching and learning conditions.

A time of transition

As with any change, the transition from the old Liaison Committee to the new LAT may result in a period of confusion and frustration. Teachers once used to meeting separately will need to adjust to having principals at meetings. Principals once used to making all—or nearly all—decisions, will need to adjust to a more collaborative role for teachers. Though JCEA contends teachers can continue to meet separately, if and when they need to, the expectation is that eventually teachers would not feel the need to meet separately.

Creating meeting norms:

One way of supporting the transition is to develop LAT meeting norms. In truth, every group has norms whether expressed or not. High functioning groups acknowledge that reality and put them in writing.

Norms are not imposed but are agreements and procedures mutually agreed to by the group. They can be changed or revisited whenever necessary. And, every meeting should end with a quick check of how well the group did in honoring the norms.

During the LAT's first meeting, seek to establish norms for safety and confidentiality within the group. The question is, what agreements (by consensus) can we make to ensure the team works in an efficient, orderly way and provides a safe decision-making environment for all participants.

For example, a typical norm might be that the LAT agrees to deal with issues and concerns, not persons or personalities. Still another might be that all meetings start and end on time.

Helpful hint: Teacher members of the LAT will be more inclined to include principals in all meetings if they believe their administrators are truly members of the team. That means

principals need to agree to a norm of respecting the LAT process. Historically, principals in some schools attended Liaison meetings, heard concerns, and then took them to a staff meeting or questioned individuals who they believed raised the concern(s). That is not only counterproductive to group problem solving, it undermines the trust necessary to build an effective team. Therefore, LATs should discuss this concern openly and honestly and propose a norm that all members agree to respect the LAT process, including the confidentiality of teachers bring forward issues/concerns, and keeping all matters brought to the LAT within the team. If that is agreed to by all, including the principal, then there is no practical reason why teachers would need to meet alone. However, if the principal is unwilling to agree to this or a similar norm, then clearly trust is lacking and teachers may feel a need to meet separately.

Revisit your school's CDM process:

Because the LAT is now a part of the school's CDM process, a second way to encourage a positive transition is to provide every staff the opportunity to revisit the cooperative decision making model. The CDM process is outlined in Appendix #3 of the Master Agreement. It clearly states that every school shall engage in a process to determine what individual, group and/or committee is empowered to make decisions. The CDM language does not specify creating a single CDM body, though the school could choose to do that. Some schools, which have completed the process, have divided the decision making process between one or more individuals, groups or committees.

What is clear in Appendix #3 is this is not solely the principal's decision, but a collaborative decision to be made with teachers. The new Article 20 provides teachers a unique opportunity to re-define, in collaboration with the principal, what authority the LAT will have (in addition to those already provided for in Article 20).

Helpful hint: Because few schools have reviewed their CDM process since the original 1996 deadline, trying to do so now may be overwhelming and time consuming. So, consider first working with the principal to devise a transitional CDM process that includes designated responsibilities for the LAT. Then, take those to the faculty for discussion and agreement. After the LAT begins to function, it can then begin planning for a more comprehensive approach to CDM. There is great wisdom in the organization development slogan "go slow, to go fast."

LATs are established by the Agreement

Article 20 of the current Agreement between the JCEA and JPS establishes Leadership Advisory Teams in every school. Article 20 reads [emphasis added]:

"20-1 Each school will select a leadership team comprised of teacher selected representatives, the building's Association representative, and the building administration which **will meet monthly** or as needed for the purpose of **collaborative decision making**. Meeting times will be determined by the team and will normally occur within the work week.

20-2 The teacher members of the team will be **selected by their peers** by grade level, department level, or other such method as determined by the faculty. The size of the team may vary, with up to one representative for every 5-10 faculty members in the building. At the beginning of each school year, the local faculty will elect a

Leadership Advisory Team for each school building or faculty unit. A small school may elect to be a committee of the whole.

20-3 The Team will meet to review and discuss school practices and problems including, but not limited to, use of facilities, staff utilization, building schedules, after-hour duties, student discipline, attendance, **and non-contact days as specified in Section 9-2** [collaborative process] **and Section 15-6** [consultative process], **professional development needs, types and number of other building committees."**

- **The Leadership Advisory Teams must discuss/decide:** the utilization of non-contact days, the allocation of \$10,000/school for workload relief (2008 MOU), requests to the JPS Class Size Relief Committee (Art. 18-5-3), and any areas of decision-making delegated to them by the school's CDM process.
- **It may discuss:** faculty meetings, school safety plans, work area(s) for teachers, report cards, special duties/assignments, attendance problems, curriculum, use of teacher aides, student detention, budgets, class organization, maintenance, testing, school-community relations, pupil organizations, dress code of students, student behavior, building orientation, scheduling/work load, homework policy. **In short, the Leadership Advisory Team may meet to review and discuss any school practice and problem that the either the LAT has agreed to discuss or which the staff, through the CDM process, has delegated to them.**
- **The Leadership Advisory Teams should not discuss:** individual contract disputes or enforcement. The Leadership Advisory Team cannot agree to waive rights found in the contract. For example, it would be inappropriate for the team to consider a recommendation to waive the right to teacher directed preparation periods. However, if the principal chooses to implement such a practice, it would be appropriate for the team to address the issues in an effort to avoid a potential contract violation or grievance. If the contract has been violated, the individuals affected should contact their AR and JCEA.

Finally, the Leadership Advisory Team is not a forum to pit teacher against teacher or teacher(s) vs. principal. Normally, employee disputes, personality conflicts, or contractual matters have no place within the Leadership Advisory Team format.

Leadership Advisory Teams represent teachers!

As is true with any representative body, the LAT members must have the confidence of those they represent. The Leadership Advisory Team must work diligently and purposefully to gain and maintain its representative status.

Since all teacher members of the Leadership Advisory Team are elected by the teachers (per contract and the school's bylaws), the team should already be representative. However, in order to earn and maintain their confidence, the team must regularly provide all teachers the opportunity: 1) to identify issues and concerns, 2) to submit agenda items for consideration, 3) to be consulted about important items of consideration, and 4) to annually evaluate the work of the Team. **Since the purpose of the Leadership Advisory Team is to represent teacher concerns, it must first be aware of those concerns before it can accurately reflect and represent them.** Many Leadership Advisory Teams work to accomplish this goal by doing the following:

Surveys: The Leadership Advisory Team should conduct an annual survey to discover

items of concern. This can be done through one-on-one or small group interviews, or on a written survey (See "Open Ended Survey" below). The information gathered from the survey should be compiled. Items should be prioritized. The committee then must decide if additional information and/or study are needed. If so, a subcommittee may be formed.

Helpful hint: To keep your Leadership Advisory Team on a constructive, problem-solving track, always test every issue you want to act on **in advance**. Ask each teacher on the staff:

1. **Is this an important issue to you?**
2. **If so, on a scale of 1-5 how important an issue is it (5 being most important)?**
3. **Do you have any suggestions/ideas how we could constructively address the issue or the concern?**

To be considered by the LAT, the average on the "importance" scale should be no lower than 3. If you have an issue that is not shared by a significant number of teachers or which may be seen as an issue by some but rates low on the "importance" scale, the committee might look at other ways to resolve the issue. It is very helpful in your conversation with the principal to be able to say that a majority of teachers feel that an item is important to them.

Minutes: Careful minutes should be taken at each meeting as an official record of the proceedings. They should include items discussed and action taken. If no action was taken report that as well. Minutes should not include discussion or specifics of what people said, only what was discussed and decided. Once approved by the LAT they should be distributed to all teachers and the principal.

Helpful hint: Because minutes can be so easily communicated, principals may be anxious about their contents. Therefore, many LATs are adopting a norm which provides that the principal has an opportunity to review the minutes prior to their distribution. This does not mean s/he has a veto or can censor the minutes, but it does mean they would have prior notice. A second helpful practice is the at the end of each meeting, the LAT would agree as to what the minutes should report. If there is not time to do that, then the minutes should be held until approved at the beginning of the next LAT meeting.

Power and authority

Historically, the Liaison committee was primarily an **advisory** body. It made recommendations to the administration who ultimately made the decision. Now, the LAT works, per the school's CDM process, to address issues related to teaching and learning. Its power to act in the best interest of teachers is directly determined by the degree of support it has earned from the teachers and the working relationship it has established with the administration. Leadership Advisory Teams that have fostered mutual respect and trust among the faculty **and** with the administration, find that their "power" to solve problems is greatly enhanced!

Helpful hint: It is important that when the Team meets, they clarify which type of decision they are to make, as per the CDM process. The three types of decisions are:

1. **Collaborative** — "Decisions made by stakeholders and/or representatives of stakeholder groups. Collaboration based on consensus ensures that all stakeholders will have a voice and will support the decision." For example, the LAT would have the authority to make decisions on any topic the teachers and principal mutually agree to assign them, as per the CDM process.

2. **Consultative** — "Decisions made by the designated individuals after consultation with stakeholders and/or representatives of stakeholder groups." For example, by contract the principal communicates to the staff in October the school's organizational pattern for involuntary transfers (Art. 35) after consulting—seeking input— from the teachers and/or LAT.
3. **Command** — "Decisions made by the designated individuals without consultation with stakeholders and or representatives of stakeholder groups." For reasons of efficiency, no consultation or collaboration is requested or expected.

Effective Leadership Advisory Teams need structure

For any representative body to function effectively, a set of guidelines or bylaws must be developed and approved by a vote of the faculty. An example of bylaws is included in this document. With only slight revisions, this example will fit every school situation. The Association Representative may request staff time (as per the contract) to discuss LAT issues with the staff and to adopt by-laws.

If you are just getting started, get a small group of teachers to agree to work on the by-laws. Develop a draft. Ask your principal for time during a staff meeting to discuss them with the faculty. They should be empowered to amend and/or adopt them. Once this process is completed, an election should be held.

Helpful hint: Think about electing your members in a way that **minimizes** the need to call extra meetings. Many schools do this through department or grade level teams. You might also think about electing representatives from lunch periods or by building geography, if your school is large. Then, if you need to discuss Team issues you can do so without the need to hold another meeting. However you choose to organize your Team (this will be spelled out in your by-laws), **be sure the members of the Team have an identified constituency with whom they agree to routinely communicate.**

Sample Leadership Advisory Team Bylaws

[Available on the web in MSW format.]

Article I: Name of Organization:

The name of the organization is _____ Leadership Advisory Team (LAT).

Article II: General purposes, duties and responsibilities of the LAT.

A. To create better communication and rapport between the faculty and administration:

1. Members shall be responsible to the faculty and act in their behalf.
2. LAT and administration will be responsible to discuss faculty concerns.

B. To discuss specific items, pursuant to Article 20 of the Master Agreement, and to submit proposals concerning:

1. Faculty welfare.
2. School policy and procedure: interpretation, evaluation, and recommendation.
3. Student discipline.
4. Professionalism.
5. Building climate/morale.

6. Recommendation of items for principal's agenda for faculty meetings.
7. Ordering instructional materials.
8. School-community relations.
9. Scheduling school activities and facilities.
10. Use of teacher aides.
11. Extra duties of faculty.
12. Other mutually agreed to items/issues.

C. To collaborate with the administration regarding the use of non-contact days, pursuant to the Master Agreement, on any items the staff has referred to the LAT, as per the CDM process, and on any items mutually agreed.

D. To channel all request for Class Size Relief (Art. 18-5-3).

E. To conduct special meetings of the faculty for the purpose of LAT business. LAT Chairperson will chair these meetings.

Article III: Membership:

A. Criteria for membership:

1. Six [any number: up to 1 representative for every 5-10 teachers] teachers representing a cross section of the faculty.
2. JCEA Association representative(s).
3. Building administration, as designated by the building principal.

B. Removal from the committee shall be due to lack attendance.

C. Vacancies shall be filled by special election.

Article IV: Officers and Representatives:

A. The officers of the LAT:

1. Chairperson
2. Secretary

B. Officers shall be elected by the LAT during their first meeting of the school year.

C. Duties of Officers:

1. Chairperson
 - a. Chair meetings.
 - b. Organize items for the agenda.
 - c. Appoint special subcommittees.
 - d. Organize special meetings of the LAT.
2. Secretary
 - a. Record and distribute minutes of the meetings.
 - b. Take attendance.
 - c. Chair meetings in absence of Chairperson.

D. Duties of Members:

1. Individually poll and discuss items with identified members of the faculty.

2. Act on behalf of faculty members in LAT matters.
3. Attend LAT meetings.

Article V: Meetings:

- A. Meetings:
 1. The LAT shall meet at least once a month.
 2. Meetings will be held at least once a month with the administration at times mutually agreeable.
 3. Meeting norms will be mutually developed annually and reviewed as needed.
- B. Meetings are open to interested faculty members for observation.
- C. Meeting areas shall be conducive to an uninterrupted exchange of views.
- D. Meetings may be canceled by mutual consent.
- E. Special meetings of the elected members may be called at the discretion of the Chairperson.
- F. Quorum for conducting business shall be a majority of the members.

Article VI: Election of Members

- A. Procedure:
 1. Each elected member shall be elected for a two-year term; half of the membership to be elected each year.
 2. The JCEA Representative(s) shall conduct the election in August.
 3. Upon the request of any faculty member, the election may be conducted by secret ballot.
- B. All interested faculty members are eligible.

Article VII: Committees may be appointed by the LAT to deal with issues and/or area(s) of concern.

Article VIII: Parliamentary Authority-Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed in conducting group proceedings.

Article IX:

- A. Adoption of Bylaws:
 1. Submit to faculty for review and approval at least one week prior to consideration.
 2. A two-thirds majority vote of the faculty shall be considered approval.
- B. Amendments to By Laws:
 1. Proposed amendments shall be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the LAT.
 2. Within two weeks, the LAT shall review, discuss and make recommendations.
 3. The amendment and LAT report shall be submitted to the faculty.
 4. A faculty vote shall be taken within two weeks.
 5. A two-thirds majority vote of the faculty shall be considered approval.

Suggested LAT timeline:

August: set up monthly meeting schedule; review LAT norms; review school budget; begin deliberations about how to spend contracted workload relief funds; ensure School Discipline Committee has been elected, as per Article 19; review school committee structure and school-wide instructional focus

September: review/make recommendation on school's organizational (staffing) pattern; review class size relief requests; make recommendation to the staff regarding the 188th "ghost day," as per article 9-2-1; finalize recommendations to staff on how to spend work load relief money!

October: conduct open-ended survey to identify staff issues/concerns.

November: analyze survey results, determine follow-up conversations for data gathering

December: work on identified issues /concerns

January: work on identified issues/concerns; review/assess LAT norms-revise as necessary

February: work with principal to review student enrollment numbers and identify where involuntary transfers may be necessary; ensure that all open continuing teaching positions (from retirees or resignation) are posted, as per Article 34.

March: conduct non-contact day survey to determine staff/professional development needs; ensure positions created by voluntary transfers are posted, as per Article 34

April: work with principal to discuss, staffing, room assignments, etc. and begin process of developing school budget; continue to ensure positions created by voluntary transfers, as posted as per Article 34

May: conduct election for open LAT positions, as per your LAT by-laws; finalize use of non-contact days for following school year; make recommendations about school budget; continue to ensure positions created by voluntary transfers as posted, as per Article 34

Sample Open Ended Survey for Faculty

Article 20 of the contract states that the Leadership Advisory Team may "discuss school practices and problems including, but not limited to, use of facilities, staff utilization, building schedules, after-hour duties, student discipline and attendance, and non-contact days as specified in Section 9-2 [collaborative process] and Section 15-6 [consultative process]."

To help the Leadership Advisory Team guide discussions with the administration, we need to know what issues, problems or practices you need/want to have discussed. Please answer the questions below and return your survey to (name) in (location) by (time) on (date). Please do not include specific contractual issues—as these should be discussed with the JCEA AR—or concerns that relate only to one individual. Data from this survey will be compiled and the results will be shared with the administration and faculty.

1. List three issues, problems, and/or concerns you would like the Leadership Advisory Team to deal with this year.
2. Of those three, which one is the most important to you and why?

Please return to _____ by _____
(LAT Chair) (Return date)

Sample Open Ended Survey for "Non-contact" Days

The JCEA/JPS contract states that the Leadership Advisory Team "collaborates" with the principal regarding *non-contact* days. The contract also encourages each school to use "A tool for Assessing School-based Professional Development" to help guide your staff development/in-service decisions. To help the committee better represent your interests and needs regarding these days, please take a moment and complete this survey.

Background: By contract we have 5 "district-wide" non-contact days. Of those five, one day is for parent-teacher conferences and one (at the start of the school year) must be "teacher directed." We also have 5 additional non-contact days that need to be allocated throughout the school calendar **in coordination with the articulation area**. Of these 5 days, at least half, or 2.5 days, must be "teacher directed." (Note: teacher directed time must be a minimum of a half-day block.) So, of those 10 days, 3.5 days must be teachers directed, one day is for conferences, and 5.5 days must be used for training and other non-contact activities.

1. When would it be most helpful to schedule the 2.5 "teacher directed" days in coordination with the articulation area?
2. When would it be most helpful to schedule the remaining 2.5 non-contact days in coordination with the articulation area?
3. Please list what you would like to know or learn more about that will help improve your skills and student learning.
4. Now review your list above and number them according to their importance (one being the most important).
5. The contract also provides for 1 day—the so-called "ghost day"—that **may** be added to your work year if that is the **collaborative decision of your faculty**. However, the faculty may also collaboratively decide **not to add** that day and simply allow teachers to claim that day as unspecified compensation for work over and beyond the 40 hour workweek. Would you prefer to schedule another work day or simply have the day added as compensation?
6. Finally, we **may** schedule 2 "modified" contact days this year to address assessment/workload issue. These days do **not** have to be coordinated with the articulation area.

Do we need these days?

When should they be scheduled?

What should we use them for?

Please return to _____ by _____

Sample LAT Evaluation Form (from a high school)

The Leadership Advisory Team is surveying the faculty in regard to items the Leadership Advisory Team should be considering and those items which have been considered this year. Please complete the following and return to _____.

A. For each of the statements below, circle a number from 1 to 6. On the continuum at the right, 6 mean "yes", "most", or a strong positive reaction. 1 means "no", "least", or a strong negative reaction.

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. The Leadership Advisory Team should meet on a regular basis. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 2. The Leadership Advisory Team should meet on a needs basis. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 3. I would like the Leadership Advisory Team to contact me by written memo. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 4. I would like the Leadership Advisory Team to contact me personally. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 5. This year, I have found it easy to contact and talk with Liaison members. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 6. This year the Leadership Advisory Team has handled issues that have affected me. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 7. I believe the Leadership Advisory Team should handle issues concerning | |
| a. Building Maintenance | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| b. Teacher work rooms | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| c. Class Size | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| d. Teacher lounge facilities | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| e. Parking | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| f. Teacher Aides | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| g. Work hours | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| h. Extra duty assignments | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| i. Staffing: | |
| (1) teacher | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| (2) administrative | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| j. _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| k. _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

B. Items handled by the Team. How important are these items?

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Substitute Office and Substitutes (Procedure) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 2. Registration (Procedure and time-lines) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 3. Feedback on administrators. (Correct procedure) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 4. Selection of administrators. (Procedure) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 5. Back to school night (Still in process) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 6. Non-contact days (Topics, procedure, etc.) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 7. Needs assessment | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 8. Staffing | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| a. Administrative (procedure for voting and information gathering) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| b. Teacher | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| c. Second semester teacher | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 9. Students excused from class by Counselors, teachers, etc. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 10. Cafeteria Service | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 11. Material copying | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 12. Parking lot (printed parking numbers) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 13. Vending Machines | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 14. Daily announcements (Procedure) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 15. Progress reports (new method) | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 16. Telephones for staff | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |
| 17. _____ | 1 2 3 4 5 6 |

Please return survey by _____

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.

—more—

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 its 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.

If you have additional questions, email Dexter Meyer: dmeyer@nea.org.