

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION'S ROLE:

Challenges:

- Lack of leadership
- Decisions made by the superintendent

Helpful hints:

Central Administration should:

- provide training for central office staff and principals on SITs and ABCs
- develop minimum guidelines for local SITs
- model school-based management in central office for local SITs
- have a positive attitude about SITs
- School Boards must adopt policies that will insure that each principal has established a School Improvement Team in their school. The policy also directs the superintendents to provide appropriate guidance to principals to work together with team members to develop, review and amend plans.

SCHOOL CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATION (DIVERSITY)

Challenges: Diversity

How do you achieve this?

All team members should accept the responsibility for achieving diversity by including all racial, socio-economic and cultural groups in your school community.

PARENT SELECTION

Challenges:

- Are PTAs held responsible for cost to hold elections of parent members?
- PTAs amending bylaws to place elected officers and Presidents on SITs?
- Criteria and credentials for parents eligible to serve?

Helpful hints:

- Any non-PTA or PTA member can participate.
- Parents, stepparents, foster parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school may vote and serve on SITs.
- PTA shall be responsible for planning and conducting the election. The election may be scheduled during a regular PTA meeting.
- PTAs should not amend their bylaws to automatically place PTA officers on SITs because this would violate state law.
- All parents, regardless of their PTA affiliation, have the right to vote on the election of parent representatives to the School Improvement Team.

TEAM TRAINING

Challenges:

- Apathy among staff members.
- Uncertain of the team's purpose; no agenda given out.
- Lack of understanding about ABCs.
- Parents not being knowledgeable about curriculum, discipline, school policies.
- Who are the experts? Where do you go to request training?
- Team interaction.

Helpful hints:

- The school district should provide training to SITs. NC PTA, NCDPI can also provide materials and training.
- Training should include the law, consensus/team building, as well as the responsibility and roles of each team member.
- PTA should provide training opportunities for parents on budget, team roles, curriculum, etc.
- The financial officer of the school district should train SIT members on school budgeting.
- Annual training for old and new SIT members should be provided.

MEETING PROCEDURES

Challenges:

- The team has not met.
- Meetings times are not convenient for parents; no flexibility offered.
- There is no structure or written procedures.
- Parents are not allowed to speak at meetings.

Helpful hints:

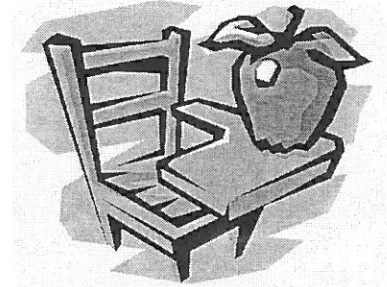
- Meetings are open to the public and are subject to all provisions of the Open Meeting Laws.
- Stagger terms for team members so all members aren't new at the same time.
- The chairman is chosen by the team.
- A printed agenda should be sent to all members prior to the meeting.
- Copy of minutes are sent to members for approval prior to next meeting.
- Appoint a recorder for the team.
- Minimum guidelines are needed. Each School Improvement Team should have their own bylaws or operating procedures.
- Terms of office should be 1 - 2 years.
- Meeting times should vary. Parents must be as flexible as other team members. The laws states that meetings shall be held at a convenient time to assure substantial parent participation.
- The State Law requires all team members be notified of all meetings.

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North Carolina PTA



PARENT MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

A GUIDE FOR LOCAL UNITS

INTRODUCTION

North Carolina's major educational reform "The ABCs of Public Education" seeks to raise student achievement through increased Accountability, an emphasis on the Basics, and local Control in decision making. Mandated in this law is the formation of School Improvement Teams (SITs) at all North Carolina schools to devise plans to increase the school's student achievement. This is "local control in action."

The state law mandates the inclusion of parents on the team, and North Carolina PTA is helping parents learn exactly what part they play on the team and how to participate. The recent Legislative session resulted in some major changes to enhance the role of School Improvement Teams and how they function.

This brochure should be used in conjunction with the NC State Department of Public Instruction's *Parent Handbook on School Improvement Teams*.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM?

A *School Improvement Team (SIT)* is a group of people who implement school-based management at a local school by developing a plan to enhance student achievement. It is a decentralized, shared process that includes people such as administrators, teachers, support staff, students, business leaders, and parents who sincerely care about all the students in that school and what they need to learn to succeed.

School-based management (SBM) is a way of reorganizing school leadership and management that shifts decision-making from the central authority of the state, superintendent or school board to the local school's educational staff and the parents. The functions and responsibilities of each team varies from school to school depending on the goals established by the team.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

The school improvement plan, as developed by the School Improvement Team, is the *end result* of a process by which a school team studies its past performance and develops a guide to improve student performance using, as stated in the law, the "annual performance goal for that school that is set by the State Board of Education." With that goal in mind, the team makes plans and develops strategies for improved student performance. How this is accomplished is up to each local SIT team — the "local control in action."

School Improvement Plans should be developed every three years, but should be amended as often as necessary to continue the school's improvement and growth.

School Improvement plans should also include strategies for parent involvement, safe schools, and instructional practices for improving school performance of "at risk" and disruptive students. Principals should also work in consultation with School Improvement Teams to plan teacher work-days.

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

North Carolina law is very specific about school improvement teams, and who they are required to include:

- the principal of the school;
- representation from among assistant principals, teachers, guidance counselors, school social workers, media specialists, coaches, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, custodians and teacher assistants; and
- representation from among parents of students enrolled in the school.

Members of the School Improvement Team may also include students, representatives from businesses, local community groups and agencies, religious leaders and higher education professionals.

Parent representatives must be elected by parents of children enrolled in the school in an election conducted by the PTA, or if none exists, by the largest organization of parents formed for this purpose.

The law also does not specify the number of team members. This is left up to each local school. However, the law implies that there should be at least two parent members. Teams must be large enough to include representation of each of the specified educator groups and include the racial/socio-economic mix of parents, but small enough to accomplish the tasks related to school improvement.

ROLES OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM MEMBERS

PARENT TEAM MEMBERS:

Challenges:

- Parents are viewed as outsiders and have difficulty gaining acceptance by school staff.
- A lack of meaningful roles available for parent members.
- A lack of interest by parents to serve on school improvement teams.
- Parents not being allowed to speak at school improvement team meetings.

Helpful Hints

Parent members should

- attend all school improvement team meetings and actively participate in all functions, including subcommittees, as the law states;
- provide accurate input to the team;
- represent and speak for all parents, not just personal views;

- communicate with other parents, keep them informed, and seek their opinions on issues before voting;
- report to PTA and other parent organizations about SIT activities; and
- become knowledgeable about the operation of the school (budget, curriculum, etc.).

TEACHER MEMBER ROLE:

Challenges

- Decisions may be handed down by the superintendent, principal or central administration.
- Teachers may be afraid to express opinions contrary to their principal's.

Helpful hints:

Teacher member should

- attend all school-based meetings and actively participate in all functions, including subcommittees;
- seek training on state education laws and local school district policy;
- solicit input from other teachers/educators; and
- seek staff development training on parent involvement.

PRINCIPAL MEMBER ROLE:

Challenges:

- A lack of leadership
- Meetings are controlled by principal

Helpful hints:

Principal members should

- be the instructional leader on the team;
- not be the chair of the team; and
- be educated on procedures and policies about SITs.