

## Decision-Making Method

The process of making decisions allows stakeholders to work together to develop mutually acceptable solutions. There is no right or wrong way to make a decision; the important thing is that the process is transparent and builds common understanding and agreement. Ideally, the solution reached will meet the relevant interests of all stakeholders. Although not all individual issues may be resolved, agreement is reached when all agree to support the final proposal. As a group, the leadership team needs to have a clear understanding and be able to explain to others how decisions are made by the team. This means clarifying what agreement means to the group and adopting the operating procedures for determining agreement. Unanimity is not realistic. Teams will not be in 100% agreement all of the time. Therefore, the group needs to determine at what point agreement has been reached and it is acceptable to move forward. Unless this is clearly defined, individuals may perceive final decisions as incomplete or “holdouts,” believing their interests will be better served by resisting the proposed agreement.

It is time well spent early in the process to determine when agreement has been achieved, the procedure for agreement, and the course of action if agreement cannot be achieved on any topic. If individuals are not in agreement, exclusion from the final solution may occur. The team has a duty to make every effort to meet the interests of the holdouts. (This is to the team's advantage as well as the individual's. Holdouts may become *spoilers*—people who try to “spoil” or block implementation of any agreement that is reached.) The Decision-Making Models table (next page) is adapted from the work of Robbins and Finley (2000) and identifies seven methods of making decisions.

Decision Making Model	
1. Consensus	Consensus is reached when all team members get a chance to voice their opinions and all agree and support the outcome. If any team member disagrees, then the discussions continue until all can agree and support the outcome. If using this method, the team should identify how it will be determined that consensus has been achieved using approaches such as fist to five or thumbs up, thumbs down, or thumbs sideways.
2. Majority Rule	This method is democracy in action; the team votes and the majority wins. Some groups use a modified majority rule model where a minimum threshold of agreement must be met (e.g., 80%) before it is considered a majority that demonstrates agreement.
3. Minority Rule	This method is used when a subgroup investigates information and makes recommendations to the entire group. When using this method, it is important to determine how final decisions about recommendations from subgroups will be made. This approach may be used as a way to bring information to the entire Leadership Team.
4. Averaging	This is the ultimate method of compromise. Team members discuss, haggle, and negotiate an intentional middle position.
5. Expert	Either an expert on the team or an external one brought in for a specific decision provides a recommendation for the team to follow.

6. Authority Rule without Discussion	This method typically leaves no room for discussion. The predetermined decision maker hands down the decisions to be followed by the team. If using this method, it is important to identify who has the authority for all decisions within each area (e.g., assessment, curriculum).
7. Authority Rule with Discussion	Under this method, those in the decision-making role make it clear from the onset that the task of decision-making is theirs. Then they join in a lively discussion of the issues; their opinions count just like other team members. When they have heard enough to make an educated decision, they cut off the discussion, make the decision, and then get back to all team members to let them know how their inputs affected their decision.

Many teams determine that a variety of methods are necessary to function effectively, depending on the circumstances. This approach to decision making works well as long as it is clear (1) when each method will be used and (2) who has the authority to make a final decision in the event of an “authority rule” model

Decision Making Method	Used by the Leadership/ Building Team when...
1. Consensus	
2. Majority Rule	
3. Minority Rule	
4. Averaging	
5. Expert	
6. Authority Rule Without Discussion	
7. Authority Rule with Discussion	

(Robbins & Finley, 2008. Why teams don't work.)

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