



Elgin Teachers Association

School/Department Committee Handbook

School/Department Committees have always been seen by the ETA as a place for teacher empowerment in the decision-making process at building or department levels.

You will find a variety of practices to pick and choose from to meet the needs of your building or department. These are not intended to be rules but rather the shared ideas between teachers and committees. If you develop forms, definitions or a process that may provide guidance or clarity to another School/Department Committee that may be in a similar situation, please send it to the ETA office so this can be disseminated to the other School/Department Committees.

School /Department Handbook Committee

*Jane Besch
Cindy Wilhelmi*

*Chris Medrano
Chris Zugel*

**Revised 08/09*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

INDEX

Contract Language and Leadership Tips	1-5
Sample Forms	6-16
Agenda Setting	17-21
Coming to Consensus	22-24
Self Evaluation	25

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

CONTRACT LANGUAGE

Section 2.54.1 - COMPOSITION

The teachers in each school/department and in each of the Special Services Departments shall elect representatives to a school/department committee as follows:

- a.) Elementary - shall elect one teacher from each grade level and one teacher from special services.*
- b.) Secondary - shall elect one teacher from each department and one teacher from special services.*
- c.) Special Services - shall elect on a ratio of one per ten teachers or fraction thereof in each department, but not fewer than three.*

Notwithstanding the foregoing, prior to the formation of the committee for any school year, a majority of all the teachers and the building/program administration may mutually agree to vary the size and composition of the school/department committee for their school/department, provided that in no event shall the school/department committee have fewer than three teachers. Absent such mutual agreement for any school year, the composition of the committee shall be as set forth above.

LEADERSHIP TIPS SUGGESTIONS FROM CURRENT PRACTICE

- Electing your School/Department Committee in the spring enables you to address issues immediately as school opens.
- Electing your School/Department Committee in the fall gives teachers/special service staff new to the building/department the opportunity to participate.
- At the first meeting each year, the committee elects a chairperson and a secretary.
- Since this committee was designed as a place for teachers/special service staff to participate in the decision making process, it is essential that a teacher chairs the committee and a teacher is the secretary.
- Secretarial responsibilities can be carried out by a different member at each meeting. It is helpful for this position to be clearly defined by the committee.
- The principal or immediate supervisor meets with the committee.

- In buildings with ELL programs, an ELL representative is suggested.
- Sub committees can address issues with a broader perspective if members are elected from all levels.
- There should be representation of tenured and pre-tenured teachers for knowledge of past practices, infusion of new ideas, and balance of experiences whenever possible.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

CONTRACT LANGUAGE

Section 2.54.3 - FUNCTIONING

The committee shall meet as needed, but not less frequently than monthly with the administration. The committee will prepare and post an agenda on the teachers' bulletin board, or appropriate alternative communication mode, two (2) days prior to the committee meeting. School/department committee minutes will be distributed to all teachers within two (2) days of a meeting. All members of the school/ department committee shall receive copies of the school/ department budget by October 1 of each school year and the regular monthly update each month thereafter.

LEADERSHIP TIPS SUGGESTIONS FROM CURRENT PRACTICE

- Meet the week before the staff meeting (more frequently if necessary)
- Agenda items are solicited from all staff in a variety of ways:

Forms are available anytime in a central location.

A "suggestion for agenda" note, specific form, email, or survey is put in mailboxes a week prior to the School/Department Committee meeting.

School/Department Committee members solicit agenda items from the constituents, with the agenda reflecting all items submitted.

- The chair compiles the agenda and seeks clarity or more information of items if needed.
- The agenda is disseminated to committee members and posted in a central location for all staff prior to the meeting.
- The minutes are distributed to members within two days (as per contract).

Secretary or chair keeps a notebook of all minutes.

Minutes are disseminated or posted for entire staff.

Minutes are confirmed/approved by the School/Department Committee.

- The minutes are discussed with level or department by the School/Department Committee member.

- The School/Department Committee adopts simple standing rules (i.e., a process for election to committee, election of chairs, and what constitutes a quorum).
- It is recommended that a log be kept of all minutes and action items with decision outcomes.
- Subcommittees (screening committees) made up from the entire staff, take a more in depth look at particular issues and report findings and recommendations to the School/Department Committee.
- Decisions can be arrived at by consensus or tabled with past practice in place until agreement on change is reached.
- Defining responsibilities of the School/Department Committee chair, secretary, administrator and members can provide clarity and continuity to the committee.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

CONTRACT LANGUAGE

Section 2.54.2 - SCOPE

The committee and the administration shall discuss and jointly determine student discipline policies and the use of the building/special services department budget including but not limited to allocations for supplementary texts, materials, supplies, and equipment to be purchased within the confines of the school/department/special services department budget. Two working days before each committee meeting, administration shall provide the committee with a monthly financial report as provided to the Board of Education, and the regular monthly building/special services department budget update.

The committee shall discuss with the administration items which will include but not be limited to: issues regarding the organization and procedures within that school or department and issues within that school or department relating to the implementation of this Agreement or districtwide Board policies.

LEADERSHIP TIPS SUGGESTIONS FROM CURRENT PRACTICE

- In regards to district funds, the committee participates in joint determination*. In regards to all other funds, they have the right to review and discuss. (See a sample of a monthly financial report in the forms section.)
- Without joint determination no action can be taken.
- Supervising duties are assigned each year according to a plan jointly determined by the school/department committee and the building administration. (See contract sections 8.21, 8.22 on supervision.)
- Student discipline policies are jointly determined and the committee needs to insure that enforcement of the student discipline is consistent with the policies.
- In regards to Appendix F Intramural funds in the middle school, the school department decides on how this money is allocated.

**Joint determination - an agreement between administration and the majority of the teachers.*

(5)

Sample School Department Forms

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

SAMPLE FORMS

The forms in this section were shared by various school/department committees. Feel free to use what is helpful to you. Our hope is that they will spark ideas and raise questions that will help you in this process. If you have contributions of your own for this handbook, please send them to the ETA office.

When an issue is brought to School/Department Committee, it is important that signing their name to the form be kept optional.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

*Sample form

BUILDING COMMITTEE CONCERNS

Please review these suggestion steps before bringing concerns to Building Committee:

- a. _____ I have discussed my concern with the colleague(s) involved.
- b. _____ I have discussed my concern with the _____ committee.
- c. _____ I have discussed this concern with the principal.

2. Please state or describe concern briefly:

3. Action recommended by Building Committee:

_____ Concern referred to _____ Committee.

_____ Concern needs to be addressed with colleague(s).

_____ Concern needs to be addressed with principal.

_____ Concern placed on Building Committee Agenda.

Sign if you wish a response: _____

Please fold sheet and place in "Building Committee Concerns" envelope provided in Building Committee mailbox.

**Centennial School*

School Department Concern Form

Please review these suggestion steps before bringing concerns to School Department:

- _____ I have discussed my concern with the colleague(s) involved.
- _____ I have discussed my concern with the _____ committee.
- _____ I have discussed this concern with the principal or assistant principal.
- _____ Other:
-

Concern deals with...

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ School Dude | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Fundraiser | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Supervisions | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Budget | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Scheduling | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Procedures | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Clerical Aid | <input type="checkbox"/> ___ Teacher Handbook | |

Please state/describe the concern briefly:

What opinions or solutions do you suggest?

Name _____ **(optional)**

Filled out by SD Chair:

- _____ Concern placed on School Department Agenda for _____
- _____ Concern referred to _____
- _____ Concern needs to be addressed with colleague(s)
- _____ Concern needs to be addressed with administration

(8)

Application for Intramural Activities Under Appendix F

Sponsor(s):

Location:

Times:

Duration:

Requested Hours:

Students Involved:

Limiting Factors:

Description of Activities:

**Abbott Middle School*

School Year _____
Applications and Allocations for
Appendix F

Activity/Sponsor(s)	Hour Request	Hours Granted

**Abbott Middle School*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

*Sample form

Centennial Building Committee Agenda

Date:_____

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Approval of Minutes
- IV. Unfinished Business
- V. New Business
- VI. Adjournment

Centennial School

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

* Sample form

Describe the issue you would like to have discussed at School/Department Committee.

What opinions or solutions would you suggest?

Would you like to be at the meeting for the discussion?

Name _____
(optional)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

**Sample form*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON DUTIES (94-95)

1. Chair schedules meeting with Principal for the Wednesday or Thursday before the Tuesday scheduled School/Department Committee Meeting.
2. Chair posts note to remind staff to have any concerns in School/Department Committee mailbox prior to meeting with principal.
3. Chair checks School/Department Committee mailbox for any concerns from staff prior to meeting with Principal.
4. Chair meets with Principal to discuss any administrative concerns. Agenda for School/Department Committee meeting is made.
5. Chair posts agenda items form for staff to read/view at least 48 hours prior to scheduled School/Department Committee meeting.
6. Chair makes copies of agenda items form for all School/Department Committee members and principal plus one copy for notebook.
7. Chair runs School/Department Committee meeting. At end of meeting, chair has the minutes reviewed by members for accuracy (School/Department Committee meeting attendance is noted in minutes).
8. Chair makes and returns a copy of concern form to any staff requesting a response.
9. After School/Department Committee meeting chair updates the School/Department Committee notebook. This includes the following items:
 - a. *Agenda Items Form,*
 - b. *Concerns Forms received from staff,*
 - c. *Copy of notes taken at School/Department Committee meeting.*
10. Chair turns over School/Department Committee notebook to assigned chair, for next month.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

*Sample form

BUILDING/COMMITTEE AGENDA

Date: _____

	ISSUE	NAME
1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____
6	_____	_____
7	_____	_____
8	_____	_____
9	_____	_____
10	_____	_____

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

**Sample form*

FORMAT FOR FINANCIAL REPORT

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

AGENDA SETTING

The following pages include samples that are intended to help you develop your own agenda-setting process. Other ideas can be found in the section containing forms.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

AGENDA SETTING

**sample notice*

To: Faculty Members

From: Ima Teacher, School/Department Committee Chair

RE: ***Building Concerns***

Date: March 3, 1999

Since our regular School /Department Committee meeting, held on the second Wednesday of the month, falls on a holiday, the March meeting will be held on Thursday, March 16, at 2:45 p.m., in the faculty workroom.

If you have a concern, question or problem that you have been unable to resolve and would like the School/Department Committee to consider it, please drop a note in my mailbox by the end of school Friday, March 10.

**Scott Eshelman, Nuts and Bolts Training, Oct., 1992.*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

AGENDA SETTING

**sample*

AGENDA-SETTING MEETING

Concerns received:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Issue | 1. Ventilation problem in Room 120. |
| Disposition | S/D Committee Agenda |
| Issue | 2. Problem with teacher's insurance |
| Disposition | Ask teacher to contact personnel. |
| Issue | 3. Announcement of special fund-raiser by 4th grade. |
| Disposition | S/D Committee Agenda |
| Issue | 4. Students running in halls. |
| Disposition | S/D Committee Agenda. |
| Issue | 5. Picture Day Procedures - Can we improve on last year's process? |
| Disposition | S/D Committee Agenda |

**Scott Eshelman, Nuts and Bolts Training, Oct., 1992.*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

AGENDA SETTING

**Sample*

Meeting With Principal For Administrative Concerns

Monday, March 13, 2008

1. Spring Sing
2. School Newsletter Articles
3. March Budget Receipts and Expenditures

**Scott Eshelman, Nuts and Bolts Training, Oct., 1992.*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

AGENDA SETTING

**Sample Agenda*

**Sunset School
School/Department Committee
March 16, 2008**

Agenda

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of the Agenda
- III. Approval of February Minutes
- IV. Unfinished Business
 - A. *Testing Procedures*
 - B. *Building Maintenance*
- V. Review of February Budget
- VI. New Business
 - A. *Ventilation Problems in Room 120*
 - B. *Students Running in Halls*
 - C. *Picture Day Procedure*
 - D. *School Newsletter Articles*
 - E. *Spring Sing*
 - F. *Announcement of Special Fund-Raiser*
- VII. Adjournment

(Posted 2 days prior to School/Department Committee meeting)

**Scott Eshelman, Nuts and Bolts Training Oct., 1992.*

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

COMING TO CONSENSUS

WHAT IS CONSENSUS?

Consensus means general agreement and concord. For consensus to exist, it is not necessary for every participant to agree in full, but it is necessary for every person to be heard and, in the end, for none to believe that the decision violates his or her convictions. It is not necessary that every person consider the decision the best one.

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- The issue or problem that is to be solved by consensus decision making is clearly defined.
- Members of the group state their solution or current position about the issue or problem.
- Get a sense of the direction of the group by using a consensus technique.
- Let those with strong feelings about the sense of direction the group is taking speak to clarify, refine, or create new ideas.
- Continue this process until a decision that all can abide is reached, a choice everyone can support.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

COMING TO CONSENSUS

Tips For Using Consensus Decision Making

- Insist that all views be heard, understood and respected. (*Avoid arguing for your own position.*)
- Legitimize all perceptions.
- Seek out differences of opinion.
- Confront problems, misunderstandings, and bad feelings early in the phases.
- Address issues, not people.
- Get agreement on the problem or the vision before going on to solutions.
- Look for little successes first, before tackling the “big” problem.
- Look for ways of breaking fixation and redefining the problem/solution space. Avoid win/lose and either/or propositions. Don’t assume that someone must lose and someone must win at stalemate positions. Look for the next most acceptable alternative.
- Get agreement on criteria before evaluating the alternatives.
- Keep backing up to the phase and level of generality where a foundation of agreements can be developed. Keep summing up agreements.
- Don’t change your position just to avoid conflict.
- Avoid premature motions.
- Avoid conflict reducing techniques like majority vote, averages, coin toss or bargaining.
- Use formal voting as a last approach.

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

COMING TO CONSENSUS

Straw Poll For Agreement and Implementation

This technique could be used to determine the degrees of feelings about any one issue. The issue may be one that members feel uncomfortable in verbalizing their views, or it could be a topic in which there has been heated debate and more talk will not be of any benefit. Everyone needs to take part in the poll, no one should pass or it defeats the purpose of the poll. All members simultaneously hold up their fingers when given the agreed upon signal by the chair.

Five Fingers: Total Agreement
Best Solution
Complete Support

Four Fingers: Agreement
Support
Good Solution

Three Fingers: Willing To Support

Two Fingers: Don't Agree
Won't Support

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT COMMITTEE

SELF EVALUATION

1. Does your School/Department Committee fulfill the function of the School/Department Committee as stated in the contract?
2. In addition to the contractual language, what do you want your School/Department Committee to do?
3. What are the responsibilities of the School/Department Committee members? The chair? The secretary? The principal?
4. What are your strengths as a committee? Why?
5. What areas do you want to strengthen? Why?
6. How can you strengthen these areas? (i.e.: training, information, workshops, teacher networking, etc.)
7. Do you document practices so requests for change are data driven?
8. Do you actively advocate on your own behalf?
9. Do you elect a chair?
10. Does the chair pull actions together and maintain momentum?
11. Are ideas generated or abandoned with data and faculty input?
12. Do the principal and teachers focus their attention on issues and areas of needed actions?
13. Is the total faculty involved in making decisions?
14. Are decisions made with consensus?

INDEX

**Contract Language
and
Leadership Tips**

Sample Forms

Agenda Setting

Running A Meeting

Budget

**Coming To
Consensus**

**Minutes From
Meetings**

Self Evaluation



Elgin Teachers Association

School/Department

Committee

Handbook