

# **Lake George Central School District**

## **Collaborative Processes and SHARED DECISION-MAKING PLAN**

**“We are lifelong learners, leaders, and global citizens”**

### **Introduction**

In the Lake George Central School District, we recognize that our community’s greatest asset is our children. In service to our children, we are committed to academically and socio-emotionally supporting each child throughout their school career at Lake George Schools. This commitment is a powerful underpinning of our mission to personalize opportunities that empower all students to be lifelong learners, leaders and global citizens; and of our vision to foster academic and personal excellence, responsibility, and cultural awareness.

Lake George Central School District has a long-standing tradition of collaborative decision-making which places students at the center of each decision. Further, we uphold the philosophy that decision making which is informed by multiple perspectives and professional expertise is in the best interest of students. We are proud that our compass points, the District’s Mission, Vision, and Values, were developed through a shared decision-making process by a group called the Strategic Plan and Review Committee (SPARC).

As outlined below, New York State Educational Law has expectations of school districts regarding shared decision making. It is reassuring to note that our long held commitments and philosophies are affirmed by and aligned with NYS Educational Law tenets.

### **Background**

In May, 1992, the New York State Board of Regents adopted Section 100.11 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. The Regulations require each public school district Board of Education, and each Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) to develop and adopt a district plan for the participation of teachers, parents, and administrators in school-based planning and shared decision-making (SDM).

The Collaborative Processes and Shared Decision-Making Plan was developed through a committee made of parents, teachers, administrators, and the superintendent of schools in 2020. The plan is to be reviewed biennially by the district shared decision-making committee and recommended for readoption by the board of education.

## **Purpose of the Shared Decision-Making Plan**

As described in NYSED Regulation 100.11, the purpose of school-based planning and shared decision-making will be to improve the educational performance of all students in the school, regardless of such factors as socioeconomic status, race, sex, language, background, or disability. School based planning and shared-decision making is rooted in the belief that the most effective decisions include participation by those that are directly affected by the decision. Shared decision-making is a process by which stakeholders come together for the purpose of identifying issues and setting goals to improve student learning and advance the mission of the district. In order for a shared-decision making process to be successful, team members are required to demonstrate reciprocal trust, collaboration, transparency, and a sense of shared responsibility. Effective shared decision-making teams work together using a systematic process and are united in their commitment to student achievement.

The Lake George Central School District Shared Decision-Making Plan is designed to guide collaborative processes in the Lake George Central Schools. The board of education views this plan as an exceptional opportunity to feature and model with intention our core values of Collaboration, Respect, Excellence, Accountability, Trust, and Empathy, as we work together to support our students. It is understood that after using collaborative processes to gather the appropriate input, final authority on all matters rests with the superintendent and the board of education.

At Lake George Central School District, a recognized collaborative/shared decision making body has the following characteristics:

- A purpose defined by a formal charge that meets student needs.
- A combination of members from identified stakeholder groups such as (BoE, administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, community members, ).

## **I Educational Issues Subject to Shared Decision-Making**

The Lake George Central School Shared Decision Making bodies have the primary purpose and responsibility to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate decisions directly related to improving student achievement, this includes academic coursework, physical, social, and emotional well-being.

While the commissioner's regulations do not define which educational issues school based SDM committees must consider, there are countless issues that may require and benefit from the attention of the SDM. The school board, superintendent, and building administrators are

expected to work together with SDM committees to define what issues are appropriate for consideration.

The following list represents examples of broad topics that may be considered by shared decision-making teams. The charge given to a SDM body, in any of these domains, will be in keeping with the roles and responsibilities of the group. This list is offered to stimulate the thought process rather than to limit it.

- Data Review and Analysis
- Health, Wellness, and Safety
- Parental/Community Involvement
- School/Classroom Procedures
- Curriculum Review
- Communications
- Facilities
- Athletics
- Hiring
- School Climate
- Professional Growth

Shared decision-making committee decisions must be made within the constraints of:

- Budgetary limits
- Union contracts
- State and Federal Law
- Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulations
- Issues of confidentiality
- Time constraints
- Education law
- Education commissioner guidance

## **Special Considerations**

Crafting a committee charge is especially important. Some topics remain in the direct purview of the board and administration, and would not be given as a charge to a committee. However, a committee's findings may touch upon these topics and inform larger decisions. Upon recommendations from the superintendent, final decisions for course of study, organization of district schools, formulation of budget, and awarding and denying tenure are examples of the direct responsibility of the board of education.

## **Personnel**

Lake George Central School District Shared Decision Making committees may set goals or be charged with topics that lead to input regarding staffing needs or a recommendation for hiring. This input is valued and welcome in an advisory capacity. Final recommendations to the board of education for personnel appointments and changes are the responsibility of the superintendent. Approvals are reached through majority vote of the board of education.

## **Fiscal Affairs**

While an SDM committee would not be charged with formulating the district budget, it may be called upon to gather specific data which would help inform budgetary decisions at the district level. The legal responsibility for managing a district's fiscal affairs lies with the school board. Governing boards are responsible for steering and overseeing the fiscal operations of local governments while managers are responsible for directing daily operations. The audit and finance committee is a required advisory committee and there are strict parameters for serving on it. No members of the audit and finance committee may be employed by the district. Based on the need for financial and audit expertise and committee function, the board may appoint both school board members and community members to the audit committee. Criteria for serving on the audit and finance committee is laid out in that committee's charter.

## **II Manner and Extent of Expected Involvement**

Lake George Central School District embraces collaborative processes throughout its organization. This is plainly evidenced through the structure and functioning of its many varied committees. NYSED Regulation 100.11 stipulates the participation of parents and teachers with administrators and school board members in school-based planning and shared decision-making.

All building and district committees will operate under a charge approved by the supervising administrator. The school leadership team, led by the superintendent, will collaborate on and communicate initial committee charges as well as ongoing progress. As we aspire for thoroughness in communication, transparency, and district-wide cohesion, all district leaders will be kept apprised of committee charges.

Board level committees will operate under charges approved by the board of education.

When a committee completes a charge they make a report to their respective administrator. Building level committees report to principals, district level committees report to the superintendent, board level committees report to the whole board. If committee reports require further action or approval these will be conveyed by the appropriate administrator to the superintendent and, if necessary, the superintendent will bring them to the board.

### **Types of Collaborative Committees**

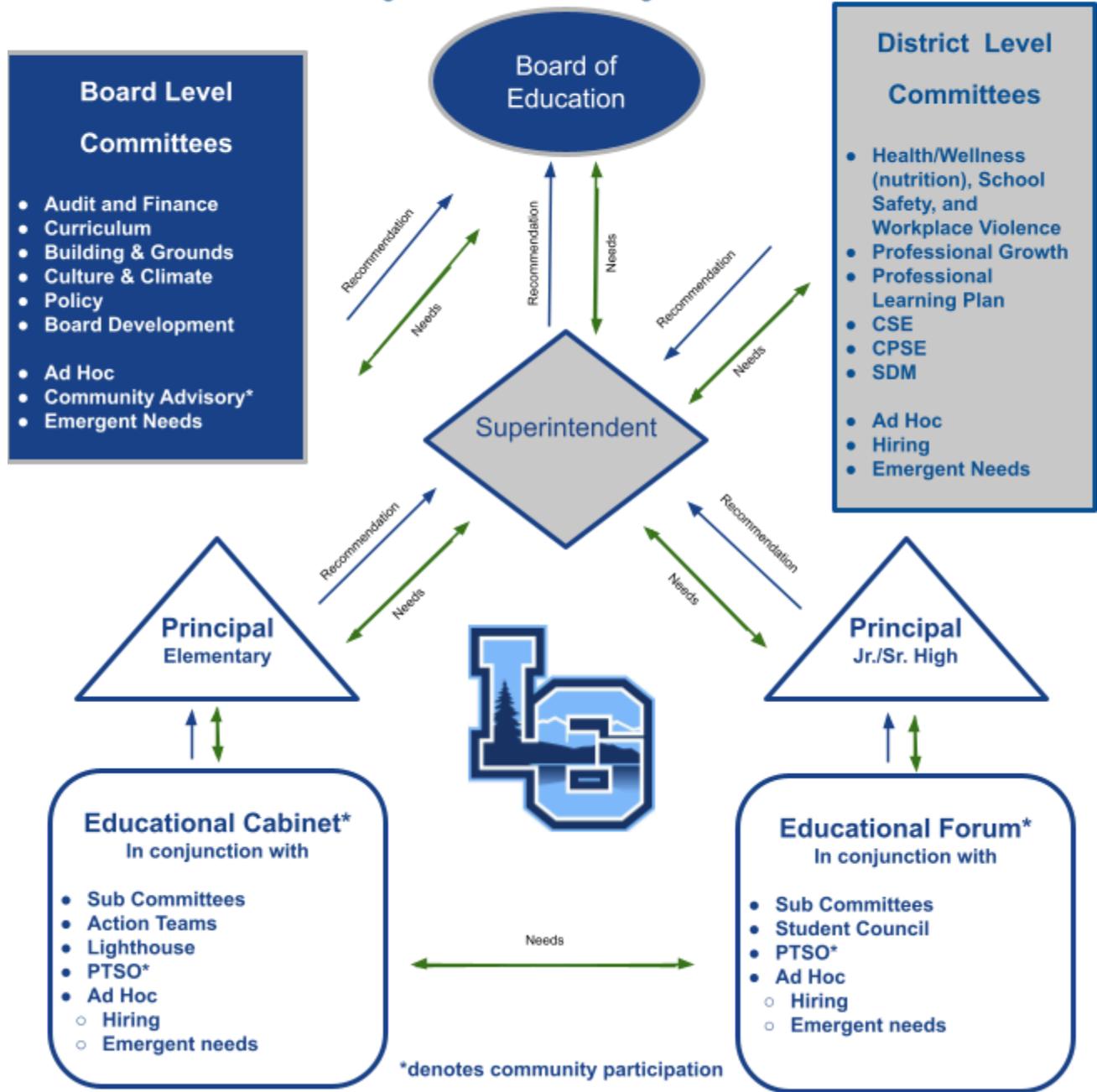
1. **Building Level Committees– Educational Cabinet (Elementary School) and Educational Forum (Jr/Sr High School)**. Collaborative problem solving and innovation have long been a fundamental part of the culture of the Lake George Schools. Over a period of time, each school building shared decision-making committee has developed a broad range of protocols (linked above) that are well-documented and compatible with Commissioner Regulation 100.11. The building level shared decision-making committees

are designed to deal with issues that arise affecting curriculum, instruction, school climate and student development in a specific building.

2. **District Level Committees** – There are a variety of standing district level committees, and each employs collaborative processes to varying degrees. The district level shared decision-making committees are designed to address issues that impact the district as a whole.
3. **Board Level Committees**– There are a variety of standing Board of Education level committees, and each employs collaborative processes to varying degrees. The superintendent may assign district administrators, faculty, and staff as participants and presenters to these committees.
4. **Ad Hoc Committees** – There are times when the board, the superintendent or administrators will find it necessary to form a committee for a short time to investigate a specific topic and issue specific recommendations. This is referred to as an “ad hoc” committee. Ad hoc committees are formed and supported at any of the committee levels: Building, District, or Board. The purpose of referring an issue to an ad hoc SDM committee is to improve the quality of education for all students. The board, superintendent, and administrators will be sensitive to the number of ad hoc committees that are being charged at any given point. The following guidelines for ad hoc committees should be followed:
  - When an ad hoc committee is necessary, the appropriate administrator or board of education will create a charge for the committee. Principals charge building level committees, superintendent charges district level committees, board of education charges board level committees.
  - The charge to an ad hoc SDM committee should include:
    - The student need that informs committee work
    - A clear articulation of the task and scope expected from committee work
    - An opportunity to seek clarification of the charge
    - A specification of committee membership
    - A clear understanding that members act as advisors - not final decision makers
    - A realistic timeline with flexibility when appropriate

# Lake George Central School District Shared Decision Making Structure

*Meeting Student Needs Through Collaboration*



<b>Building Level</b>																															
	<b>Elementary Educational Cabinet</b>		<b>Jr/Sr High Educational Forum</b>																												
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an environment of support and respect in the sharing of information</li> <li>● Identify student needs</li> <li>● Set annual goals in line with LGCS D Mission Vision &amp; Values</li> <li>● Share thoughts, expertise, and research</li> <li>● Examine data</li> <li>● Seek consensus</li> <li>● Attend all meetings</li> <li>● Communicate information to representative groups</li> <li>● Adhere to all law, policy, regulations, and contracts</li> <li>● Operate with fiscal responsibility</li> <li>● Collaborate with other Elementary, Jr/Sr High, district, and board shared decision-making bodies/committees.</li> <li>● Advocate in the best interests of the students</li> <li>● Engage in the implementation of initiatives</li> <li>● Evaluate for ongoing improvement</li> </ul>																														
Team Configuration	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">Stakeholder group</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Cabinet</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Forum</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Selected by</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Teachers</td> <td>5-7</td> <td>6</td> <td>L.G.E.A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Administrators</td> <td>2</td> <td>1</td> <td>Principal</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Support Staff</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>L.G.S.A</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Students</td> <td>0</td> <td>2-3</td> <td>Student Council</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parents</td> <td>2-3</td> <td>2</td> <td>P.T.S.O</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>Community Application/ Principal</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Stakeholder group	Cabinet	Forum	Selected by	Teachers	5-7	6	L.G.E.A	Administrators	2	1	Principal	Support Staff	1	2	L.G.S.A	Students	0	2-3	Student Council	Parents	2-3	2	P.T.S.O	Community	0	2	Community Application/ Principal
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Term of Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cabinet team members will serve one year terms. Forum team members serve three-year terms with the exception of student members who serve one-year terms.</li> <li>● The Principal is a permanent member of the building shared</li> </ul>																														

	<p>decision-making team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms begin at the start of the school year</li> </ul>
Selection Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Principal is the permanent member of the SDM team.</li> <li>• Teachers/ Assistants are selected by the Lake George Education Association.</li> <li>• Staff members are selected by the Lake George Central School Staff Association.</li> <li>• Students, with approval of the Principal, are selected by the Jr./Sr. High School student council.</li> <li>• Parents are selected by the principal with input and collaboration with the Lake George Central School District Parent Teachers Organization (P.T.S.O.)</li> </ul>
Meeting Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings will be held monthly, but more often if needed. The time and length of the meetings will be determined by the individual teams depending on the issues being considered.</li> <li>• Sub-committees may be established by the SDM committee to research and collect information on specific topics and report findings to the building team.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An agenda is prepared and posted in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>• Minutes will be shared with district staff</li> <li>• Annual reports will be submitted to the Superintendent and updates will be reported out as part of the principal's reports at board of education meetings</li> <li>• Other sources of communication methods include but are not limited to newsletters and parentsquare messages.</li> </ul>

	<b>Board Level Committees</b>
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an environment of support and respect in the sharing of information</li> <li>● Meet the oversight responsibility and standard of policy set by the board.</li> <li>● Set annual goals in line with LGCSD Mission Vision &amp; Values to meet student needs</li> <li>● Share thoughts, expertise, and research</li> <li>● Examine data</li> <li>● Seek consensus</li> <li>● Attend all meetings</li> <li>● Communicate information to representative groups</li> <li>● Adhere to all law, policy, regulations, and contracts</li> <li>● Operate with fiscal responsibility</li> <li>● Collaborate with other Elementary, Jr/Sr High, district, and board shared decision-making bodies/committees.</li> <li>● Advocate in the best interests of the students</li> <li>● Engage in the implementation of initiatives</li> <li>● Evaluate for ongoing improvement</li> </ul>
Committee Configurations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Board Committees</a></li> </ul>
Term of Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board members serve three year terms.</li> <li>● Board members serving on committees are one year terms</li> </ul>
Selection Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board committees and memberships are determined annually and by vote, at the July reorganization meeting.</li> <li>● School faculty and staff are appointed as standing District consultants to the board committees by the superintendent</li> <li>● For board level ad hoc committees, parent, guardian, and community involvement is vigorously promoted through a variety of media. Every effort is made to objectively select individuals who represent diverse stakeholder groups.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agendas are prepared by committee chairs and administrators, and posted by the board clerk in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>● Committee chairs will make sure minutes are taken and given to the superintendent. The board clerk will post these on the school website.</li> </ul>

Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Board committee meetings are open meetings and are open to the faculty, staff, and public.</li> <li>● All visitors are non-participating observers.</li> <li>● Meeting agendas and minutes will be posted on the school websites</li> </ul>

	<b>District Level Committees</b>
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create an environment of support and respect in the sharing of information</li> <li>● Identify student needs</li> <li>● Establish and work within the committee charge in line with LGCSD Mission Vision &amp; Values</li> <li>● Share thoughts, expertise, and research</li> <li>● Examine data</li> <li>● Seek consensus</li> <li>● Attend all meetings</li> <li>● Communicate information to representative groups</li> <li>● Adhere to all law, policy, regulations, and contracts</li> <li>● Operate with fiscal responsibility</li> <li>● Collaborate with other Elementary, Jr/Sr High, district, and board shared decision-making bodies/committees.</li> <li>● Advocate in the best interests of the students</li> <li>● Engage in the implementation of initiatives</li> <li>● Evaluate for ongoing improvement</li> </ul>
Committee Configurations / Selection Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Committee make up determined by regulation and/or through invitations by the superintendent or designee</li> <li>● Parent, guardian, and community involvement is vigorously promoted through a variety of media as appropriate. Every effort is made to objectively select individuals who represent diverse stakeholder groups.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agendas and minutes are prepared by committee chairs and administrators and are shared with committee members electronically</li> </ul>

### **III Means and Standards to Evaluate Student Achievement**

Student achievement and outcomes will be assessed in support of the district goals. Specific assessments are broad based and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Local District assessments.
- Standardized Assessments
- New York State Regents
- Portfolio assessment, student exhibition
- New York State Assessment Results
- Graduation Rates
- ACT/SAT tests

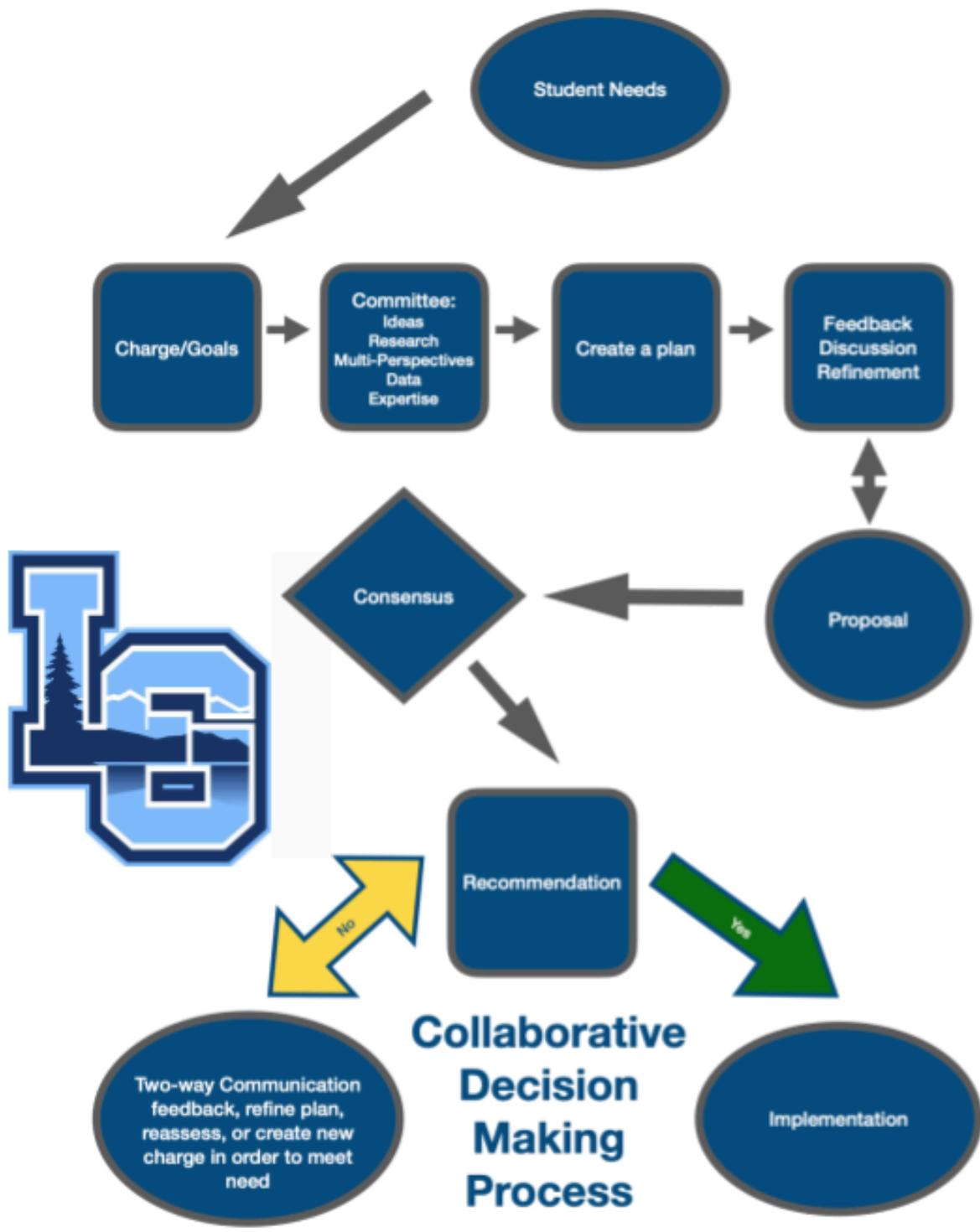
### **IV Means by Which Members will be Held Accountable**

The Board of Education will conduct a biennial review of the district shared decision-making plan assessing the success of district shared decision making processes, based on data pertaining to improvements in student achievement and stakeholder beliefs about their level of involvement in school and district decision making. Every two years the committee will make modifications to the plan if necessary and recommend the plan to the Board of Education for review and re-adoption.

The next committee recommendation to the board is due September 2026.

Additionally, members of any collaborative team are accountable to:

- Prepare for and participate in each meeting.
- Represent and reflect on the issues and input of constituents.
- Communicate information and decisions of the Shared Decision-Making Team to their respective constituent group.
- Solicit feedback from constituent groups.
- Be punctual and attend all meetings.
- Respect the thoughts and opinions of other team members.
- Support the final decision of the Shared Decision-Making Team.



## **V Dispute Resolution Process**

Consensus decision making is a process used to ensure that every individual has involvement in the discussion and decision. The process requires each team member's participation. Active listening, thinking, collaboration, trust, and respect are values that are embraced by the Lake George Central School District and are inherent in the process. Achieving consensus does not mean the vote is unanimous nor the first choice of every team member. Consensus building provides an opportunity to achieve greater ownership of the final decision.

The guidelines for the Consensus Decision Making Process is as follows:

- I agree with this decision and I will give a lot of support.
- I can live with this decision; I will be supportive.
- I don't agree with this decision, but I will trust the opinion of the group.

It is important that team members work toward consensus building. The final decision will be more supported by the larger community when the shared decision-making team is united by its decision. Various strategies may be utilized to achieve consensus. The building level SDM plans provide illustrative examples such as sub-committee work and mediation. When a consensus cannot be reached, a majority opinion will prevail.

There may be occasions when a SDM body's recommendations, for any number of legitimate reasons, can not be supported by the building administrator, superintendent, or the board of education. In such cases there will be a two way communication process that gives the committee and administrator or board the opportunity to share perspectives that may lead to revision of the recommendation or a new way to meet the student's needs. This two way communication serves the district by showing respect and value for the work of the committee and encourages ongoing participation in shared decision-making processes.

In all shared decision-making it is essential that committee recommendations are received with gratitude and professional courtesy for the work put in by committee members. Whenever possible, a formal response to recommendations will be provided in a timely manner.

## **VI Means of Coordinating State and Federal Requirements for Parent Involvement**

Certain New York State and Federal programs require parental involvement that may exceed the level of parental involvement described in this plan. In all cases where required parental involvement is greater than provided in the Lake George District Shared Decision-Making Plan, that greater involvement shall be the minimum allowed.

Whenever possible, committees will be asked to nominate or recommend people to participate in meeting Federal or State requirements for parental involvement. Whenever Federal and State programs require parental involvement, the shared decision-making framework will be utilized. Shared decision-making teams shall facilitate input, communication and involvement that will lead to compliance.