

Decatur's Collaborative Journey to Pursue Excellence

This is a draft agreement to be reviewed and revised by all people who have a stake in the MSD Decatur Township Schools according to the following process:

- A Core Team comprised of a parent, a teacher, a principal, the superintendent, a board member, and an outside facilitator prepares the first draft of the agreement.
- The Core Team discusses the agreement with the Board of School Trustees, and the Board suggests revisions.
- The Core Team discusses Board suggestions, decides on revisions, and solicits Board support.
- The Core Team and Troy announce the change effort and distribute the agreement, with Board support.
- The Core Team holds public meetings at each school (extensively publicized with Troy's help) to discuss the agreement, and stakeholders suggest revisions.
- The Core Team discusses stakeholder suggestions and decides on revisions.
- The Core Team and the Board discuss, fine-tune, and approve the final agreement, respecting all input.
- A public signing ceremony (extensively publicized with Troy's help) is held at which hundreds of stakeholders sign the agreement.

Introduction

Whereas we, the people of Decatur Township, are interested in devoting serious attention to improving our schools to better meet the needs of our children and our community

Therefore, we enter into this "agreement in spirit" among all who have a stake in our schools and with the Indiana University facilitators. This is not a legally binding agreement and in no way reduces the legal powers of the Board of School Trustees. Stakeholders include students, parents, teachers, other staff, administrators, community members, business community, and board of school trustees.

This agreement is founded on the following beliefs:

- Everyone should be called upon and empowered to help the school district to define its challenges, create solutions to those challenges, and design the direction that the district as a whole should take for the future.
- When this happens, the school system will be more readily able to embark on a path of continuous, measurable improvement for the academic success of its students, professional development opportunities for its staff, and true partnership with parents and other community members.

A. Desired outcomes and indicators (destination)

1. Develop a core of shared beliefs and values about education among all stakeholder groups, and use them to develop a common vision of education that meets every student's needs and community needs, as indicated by broad consensus on written beliefs, values, and vision.
2. Increase involvement and interest in the schools among all stakeholder groups, as indicated by increased community participation.
3. Help improve all stakeholders' understanding of educational policies, procedures and practices in Decatur, as indicated by more informed opinions and votes.
4. Develop the capability within the school system and community to engage in a sustained, equitable, participatory, collaborative change process.
5. Help the Decatur school system to meet its local, state, and national accountability requirements.
6. Share our experiences and accomplishments with others outside the community.

B. Process expectations

1. All stakeholders should be actively involved in the change effort.
2. The change effort requires all key leaders of all stakeholder groups to share control of the change process with the stakeholders, including the school board members.
3. The success of our change effort will depend to a large extent on the school board giving all the stakeholders (not just a change team) true ownership for the change process. Any school change team must represent all stakeholder groups and make decisions based on consensus from the entire community.
4. Because the change effort requires perseverance in the face of obstacles, and it is a long-term process (several years), commitment is needed at all levels of the system, and among all stakeholder groups.
5. The effort must be process-oriented rather than product-oriented—the journey is more important than the destination, for it is the journey that helps people to learn and change.
6. Throughout the change effort, all stakeholders will build awareness of, nurture, and reflect on, the process.
7. Successes will be celebrated by all stakeholders.

C. Institutional assurances, exchanges and benefits

1. All stakeholders have a right to confidentiality.
2. All participants will support the conduct of research and its dissemination, subject to the approval of MSD of Decatur Township and Indiana University.
3. The IU facilitators will provide access to Indiana University resources when possible.

D. Facilitator role

The facilitator is not a consultant, is a resource, not a decision-maker, and is impartial, not an advocate.

1. A facilitator does not assume responsibility for change, only responsibility to and with stakeholders in bringing about change.
2. A facilitator enters into a long-term relationship with the district and becomes a part of the culture.
3. A facilitator is willing to change during the process, learning along with the other participants.
4. A facilitator has no preconceived solutions for the district; rather she or he facilitates the process by which the stakeholders create their own solutions. In fact, the facilitator empowers the stakeholders to facilitate their own process for creating their own solutions.
5. A facilitator does not make any decisions, either about the solutions, or about the change process. Rather, the facilitator suggests alternatives for the change team to consider.
6. The facilitator does not act as an advocate for any group or individual. Rather she or he works with all constituencies, both inside and outside the school system, and earns the trust of all groups and individuals as a neutral resource.
7. The role of the facilitators will gradually diminish until they become unnecessary. All stakeholders will gradually assume total leadership, as well as ownership, of the change process.

E. Access

1. Facilitators will have access to all stakeholders, especially school board members, superintendent, district personnel, principals, Decatur Education Association (DEA) officials, teachers, PTA/O people, civic and business organizations, students, public service / social service people, senior citizens, ministerial alliances, and so forth.
2. Facilitators will have access to all legally accessible public documents in the school district.
3. Facilitators will have access to all school properties within the parameters of this agreement and school board policy.
4. All information gathered by the facilitators will be kept completely confidential. Facilitators will obtain appropriate approvals before sharing any sensitive information with anyone.

F. Resources / Funding

Together, the stakeholders and the facilitators will develop and implement a long-term Resource Allocation Plan for this change process, which will address the following items:

1. Stakeholder and facilitator time commitment (per week)
2. Release time for team members (with long-term commitments)
3. Mutually agreeable meeting sites
4. Equipment, materials, supplies, and support personnel

5. Funds for travel, consultants, and facilities (retreat sites, conference centers).
6. School corporation budget allocations.
7. Non-monetary contributions.
8. Grant acquisition plans.
9. Agreement for leaders to solicit public and private monetary support for the change effort.

G. Possible obstacles and commitment to address them

We recognize that during the change process, some of the following obstacles may need to be overcome:

1. Policies that constrain the change effort.
2. Burnout among team members.
3. Communications failures.
4. Changes in district leadership (board, administration, DEA, etc.).
5. Backlash from people who failed to be involved in the process.
6. Inadequate ownership/buy-in beyond the team members.
7. Inadequate stakeholder representation and participation.
8. Running out of funding.
9. Existing political groups that are against any change efforts.
10. A stakeholder group becoming antagonistic.
11. Political support declining.

The Core Team commits to proactive and timely interventions to avoid and deal with these obstacles as they arise.

H. How to revise the agreement

1. Any stakeholder who wants to propose a change to this agreement should submit a petition with a minimum of 25 signatures.
2. A public meeting of all stakeholders will be scheduled, the petition will be discussed in an attempt to reach consensus.
3. Attempts will be made to inform all stakeholders of the changes.
4. This agreement should be reviewed on a periodic basis.

I. How to terminate the agreement (for both positive and negative circumstances)

1. Stakeholders and facilitators will immediately express the nature of their discontent to all key leaders, who will then explore options.
2. If the stakeholders or facilitators feel that the goals of the agreement have been reached, they will express this to all key leaders, who will then explore options.
3. After coming to consensus, the key leaders can propose a termination and will develop a timeline for the termination.

Menu of Items for Formal Agreement

4. A public meeting of all stakeholders will be scheduled, the proposal and timeline will be discussed in an attempt to reach consensus.
5. The public will be informed of the termination and timeline through normal media outlets.

J. Signatures

1. This agreement is signed by all Stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, district personnel, principals, other staff, teachers' association officials, PTA/O people, community members, business community, and board of school trustees).
2. This agreement is signed by Indiana University facilitators.

We the undersigned will do everything in our power to help this endeavor to succeed.