

Leadership Boards and Councils

Decentralizing Decision-making in Revere Public Schools

Our district has always had strong teachers with a high degree of willingness to take on leadership roles. We have also benefitted from district leadership that has a clear and steady goal—an unwavering focus on what is best for students. We are clear that *teachers* are the most important part of the equation, and they must be effectively supported by schools and district leadership.

In 2010, we elected to be an early adopter district to implement our state's new educator evaluation framework. We knew that in order for implementation of these changes to go smoothly, we needed to engage teachers in the rollout. We created a teacher leadership role, Evaluation Teacher Leaders. Anyone could apply to take on this role and we ultimately selected two teachers per building who were well known and well respected by their peers. Their role was to become experts on the new expectations, help us think about the best ways to adapt them for our district, and to be a “go-to” source of knowledge for peers and evaluators alike.

We had great success with this model, due in large part to the way we were able to shape the conversation about evaluation around helping teachers to improve their practice. Rather than becoming an exercise in compliance, teachers helped shape the new system in a way that genuinely served teachers. This decreased fear and increased buy-in and acceptance.

After this initial success with including teachers in decision-making, we wondered: ***How can we build on this model to include teacher voice in more areas?***

Building a Structure for Shared Decision-making

We spent time thinking about all the different areas where we felt that collaborative decision-



making would be helpful and important and we decided to build out a comprehensive structure to support this. Over time, the overarching collaborative decision-making body became known as the Revere Educators Leadership Board (RELB), which is supported by seven Leadership Councils.

The Revere Educators Leadership Board (RELB)

The RELB is made up of eighty teachers and administrators from all levels and all schools across the district.

Together, this team guides and oversees district initiatives and the “change process” as we decide upon and implement new initiatives. Specifically, the RELB:

- Reviews proposals and ideas from the various Leadership Councils
- Decides whether and how to fund proposals
- Recommends solutions to challenges district leadership has identified
- Communicates with entire district about decision-making and outcomes
- Ensures that all of the district's various projects are aligned and driving the district towards student achievement, including figuring out how to measure a given initiative's impact on student achievement
- Keeps an eye on the sustainability of programs by creating support systems and providing assistance when needed
- Works closely with Central Office staff, as well as the Leadership Councils, to ensure open and clear communication and alignment of work, priorities, and decision-making

The RELB typically meets monthly, afterschool.

Members are compensated for their time and are chosen to ensure key stakeholders (central office, union leadership, administration, teachers) are represented.

The Seven Leadership Councils

Whereas the RELB is mostly involved in the "bird's eye view" of our district, the Leadership Councils are where a lot of the work specific to various initiatives takes place.

Each of the seven Councils is comprised of two members of the RELB plus additional teachers, aides, principals and other administrators for a total of approximately 10-12 members on each Council.

The Councils serve as subcommittees to the RELB. They are charged with studying a particular area more deeply and providing feedback and/or recommendations to the RELB.

Each of the seven councils is focused on a different area, including: Recruitment, Hiring and Placement, Mentor /Induction, Professional Development, Educator Growth, Teacher Leadership and Career Ladders, Organizational Structure, and Adult Professional Culture.

Each Council is co-chaired by a teacher and administrator.

The Councils meet for one hour per month, though members generally also complete work in between meetings. Teachers are compensated at their contractual hourly rate for their participation in meetings. In order to ensure a broad cross-section of schools and roles, new members are often directly recruited to join a Council.

The work of the Councils varies by area, but might include: collecting or analyzing data, conducting research, learning how other districts or states are tackling a given challenge, or developing and tracking district-wide goals.

Councils present their research findings, work, and recommendations in front of the RELB and, sometimes, the School Committee.

A Closer Look: The Teacher Leadership and Career Ladder Council

In the 2014-2015 school year, the Teacher Leadership and Career Council took on the primary responsibility for the development of Professional Learning Group facilitators to include a job description and scope of duties and expectations. They also developed interest in future projects such as a Master Mentor Program, and other avenues for current teachers to explore roles and preparation to become leaders or administrators.

Next Steps

This year, in the second year of the RELB, we are working hard on a comprehensive communication plan that will kick-off in the fall. We realized that communicating clearly and consistently at all levels is extremely important to build trust and help everyone get on board with decisions. For example, we have started using ten minutes at principal meetings to give a report out on the RELB's and the Councils' work. It is essential to always "close the loop" and let everyone know when a decision was made, why it was made, and what the next steps are.

We also learned how important it is to remain reflective and to be adaptable when we need to change course. Many Councils developed interest in ideas that when put through the lens of probable implementation, feasibility, financial constraints and expectation for broad "buy-in" were determined by either the RELB or the individual Council itself not viable. Through the RELB, the Councils are encouraged to remain resilient and foster creative thinking to continue these ideas in development and to utilize this process to expand the consideration of teacher-driven initiatives and know that all proposals are given extensive attention and consideration.

As we look to the next school year, we are thinking about how to bridge the work of the Councils with teacher leaders in schools to ensure that we are offering multiple entry points for teacher leaders and that all teachers' expertise can be leveraged effectively.

In terms of advice to other districts that are considering expanding teacher input into decision-making, we would say: Take a chance on this! Consider starting small so that you can achieve some small successes. And, build a strong communication plan from the very beginning.

Teachers are the backbone and driving force behind Revere's moral imperative: All decisions are made through the lens of what is best for kids.

Resources:

- Learn more about Revere's goals, priorities, and leadership structure: <http://www.revereps.mec.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Brochure-Revere-Schools-Final.pdf>