

Beginning a new school year - CCC

One of the necessary characteristics of anyone successful with curriculum work is attention to detail. The E-Hint "Chairing the Subject Area Committee" is full of detailed advice for chairing a Subject Area Committee (SAC). But SACs aren't the only committees beginning a new school year. This E-Hint offers detailed hints for a successful beginning with your Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC). The CCC oversees the entire academic program, K-12, and should meet once a month during the school year for this purpose. You will notice that a few of these hints are similar to SAC ones — most of them are unique to the CCC. The chairperson of the CCC should:

1. Find a suitable meeting space. Arrange seating in a "U" or square so participants can see one another during discussions. There needs to be enough table space so that Council members can lay out all their work materials: CCC notebooks, handouts, training and/or research materials. Assure the meeting room has good lighting and ventilation. Then reserve the room for each meeting date for the school year.
2. Before the first meeting make note of which members, if any, are new to the Council. The new members should have received a CCC notebook from the representatives they replaced. However, often times this doesn't happen. A "CCC notebook" is simply a notebook with dividers for necessary meeting materials. The dividers are labeled for such things as agendas and minutes, the policy document, the Long-Range Plan, the district mission statement, SAC summaries, etc. Find out which new members need binders and make those. Order new training materials as well, if needed.
3. At the first meeting, unless you're a small district where everyone already knows each other, start with introductions. Then, regardless of district size and acquaintance, have Council members report what group(s) they "represent." This tells us who will be the communication link for classroom teachers, certified support staff, administration, community, and board.
4. If possible, set aside time at the first meeting for the "old" members to clean out their Council notebooks. They can be throwing away old versions as you distribute the updated materials described below. Council members are leaders who have busy schedules – they often appreciate the time to do this at the first meeting.

5. Distribute an updated CCC member list. This membership list can be an Appendix page to the policy document or "Membership" can be a specific tab in the notebook. An updated SAC membership list showing the current membership for all SACs should also be distributed. Terms should be double-checked, as well as specific representations and spelling of names.
6. Distribute and review the meeting schedule for the year and make sure everyone has these dates on their calendars.
7. The beginning of the year is a good time to review the policy document as well as the district mission statement. If changes are needed, decide whether they are simple enough to be done at the first meeting or, if more time is needed, put this on a future agenda.
8. Review the Long Range Plan and distribute an updated version, if necessary. Hear reports on the status of each SAC. These reports may take awhile to go through, especially if there was summer SAC work. Prioritize the items within these reports that have the most immediate need for CCC action.
9. Check on the status of curriculum documents for each subject in each building. Have all classroom documents been updated, if necessary? Have old pages/versions been discarded so there is no confusion about which version is being used? Were curriculum documents left in each room for any staff member who has changed positions? Were all "building" documents (those in libraries, staff rooms, administrator offices) updated? Has an electronic version been updated and stored in a specific place? Teachers new to the district should have received their curriculum documents at new teacher orientation.
10. Brainstorm and set Council goals for the year. (Checking your policy document can help clarify goals.)
11. At all meetings, act as facilitator during discussions. If a few people are dominating the conversation, point out that we need to hear all points of view, and ask specific others what they think. When discussion starts to stray from the topic at hand, draw attention to the timeline, to pull the group back and stay on task.
12. During discussions, if a question comes up that can't be answered now, or if a topic is one that "we'll get to later," write the item on a sheet of chart paper that is displayed in a prominent place. This keeps the group from forgetting about these items, which can be added to a future agenda. When the question is finally answered, or the topic is now addressed, cross off the item on the chart.
13. Save some "wrap-up" time for the conclusion of each meeting. Review any decisions made and set the agenda for the next meeting.

These kinds of organization strategies make meetings run more efficiently and as a consequence, Council meetings are more enjoyable and productive.