

PROTOCOL ON CHANGES TO WORK PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

Changes to work practices within schools are always best achieved in a spirit of consensus and collaboration. Consultation should be the bedrock of all changes to work practices. Schools where good communication is normal are invariably places where staff morale is higher and the operation of the school is efficient.



Good Practice: Achievement of Consensus

When change is to be initiated in a school it should follow a process that ensures:

- (a) written copies of the proposals are circulated by management to staff as appropriate
- (b) a forum is provided for the entire staff to discuss the proposed changes
- (c) meaningful consultation takes place which allows and respects all points of view

- (d) adequate notice of discussion is provided and documentation is available to all concerned in a timely manner
- (e) sufficient time is allowed for all participants to make their views known and be considered
- (f) inclusive participation for all, including those with a precarious employment status
- (g) an ASTI members' meeting can take place where teachers' terms and conditions are affected by the proposed changes

- (h) members can carefully consider and attempt to quantify the full impacts of any proposal through the lens of:
 - Additional workload – intensity/difficulty of work
 - Time demands and whether time neutral
 - Flexibility requirements
 - Teacher welfare
- (i) secret balloting happens on major questions that have relevance to workplace terms and conditions

Note: ASTI members are encouraged to review the impact of the implementation of workplace change after an appropriate period of time to ascertain if the measures have achieved the expected outcomes.

Consensus

The term consensus is set out in a letter from the Labour Relations Commission dated 12th January, 2011. The definition of consensus is as follows:

In this context consensus does not mean a simple majority or veto but is provided where general agreement and support has been granted.

It is clear from the above that consensus does not require unanimity but requires significantly more than a simple majority.

The required process in relation to the achievement of consensus is that:

- ASTI to convene a meeting of school members
- This meeting is to address any issues in relation to the matter
- At this meeting a decision to be taken by ASTI members in attendance as to whether to accept or reject each option requiring consensus presented by management
- The position of the ASTI members as determined at the school members' meeting should be communicated to all ASTI members in the school and should also be communicated to management
- If the ASTI position is to reject a proposed option then there can be no consensus in respect of this proposal
- In the absence of a consensus in respect of a proposed change, staff would expect that the status quo would be maintained

Note: In dual union schools a meeting should be held with the representatives of the other union(s) in relation to any proposal that requires consensus in order to inform them of the ASTI position (as determined above).

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