

Lansing School District News

Decision-Making Team Advises on HS Issues

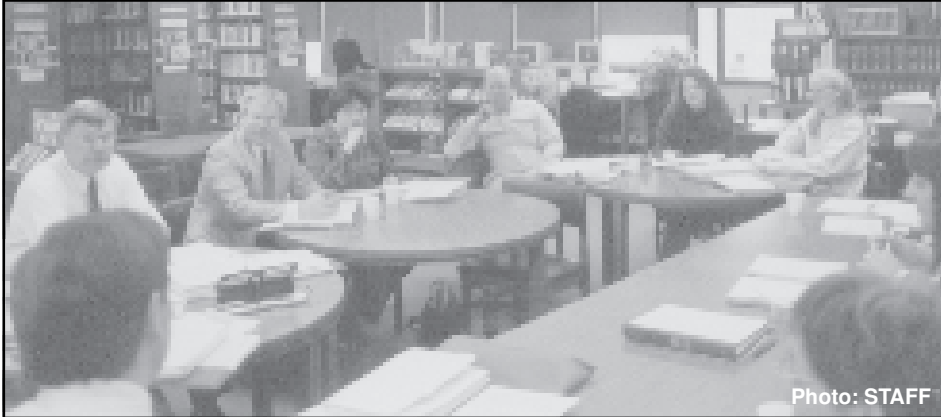


Photo: STAFF

EARLY RISERS - No matter the season, the high school Shared Decision-Making Team of parents, students, faculty, support staff and administrators meets at the crack of dawn to discuss academic, social, administrative and operational aspects of school life.

High School Library: 6:30 AM - At least three times a month, the thirteen member High School Shared Decision Making Team (SDMT) gathers in the library to discuss such varied concerns as next September's 20% jump in high school students, the size of cafeteria portions, staffing requests and student concerns about access to faculty for academic counselling.

Created in 1993 in response to a State Education Department directive to all school districts to involve parents, faculty, students, administration and support staff in every school, Lansing's three SDMTs first met in 1994.

In addition to the building principal who represents the administration, each team has an equal number of slots reserved for parents (chosen by the PTSO), students (chosen by the Student Council), faculty (chosen by the Lansing Faculty Association), nonteaching staff (chosen by the Lansing Support Staff Assoc.) and two "at-large" members who may not fall into the previous categories. As a matter of policy, each team functions by consensus [rather than simple majority rule] and passes on its recommendations to the Board of Education.

Why Meet at 6:30 AM

At an hour when most people are

bounding (or pulling themselves) from bed, the high school SDMT is discussing school affairs because, "if you want student involvement, this is the only time they have available due to afternoon and evening sports and extracurricular activities."

The SDMT was created to allow all people to come and give input, explained school psychologist Pennee Barresi. "Whenever a member of the public comes to a meeting, he or she's invited to pull a chair up and become a *defacto* member of the committee," said parent Bill Turner.

"Lansing's really lucky," said at-large member Kathy Miller. "In some districts, SDMTs are more fluff than substance. That's not at all the case in Lansing, where the (school) Board has taken the SDMT as a serious partner."

Budget Input

Last year, the team spent months going over preliminary building plans and made a number of recommendations to adjust aspects of the construction project to accommodate class sizes and needs. Though this year's high school SDMT has looked at curriculum, staffing, food service, student life and enrichment issues, one of the roles it's taken on is the responsibility for getting student, parent and the general public's input about budget priorities to the Board of Education.

The team has worked on staffing recommendations since September, both in response to sizeable projected increases in the student body and to changes in State Education Department that will require that every student in the Class of 2000 meets new English requirements and that each student



Photo: STAFF

TIME OUT - Lansing's modified softball team took a moment out of practice just before vacation. Attention honorable opponents: Don't let the relaxed pose fool you. *These cats mean business!!*

in the Class of 2001 must pass a Regents Math test in order to receive a high school diploma.

"We met with every department coordinator to get direct impact," said at-large member Sue Losey. The team eventually recommended adding a 1/2 time Enrichment (gifted & talented) position, a full time math position, changing a 2/3 English to a full-time position, changing a 1/3 Science to a half-time position and changing a half-time Foreign Language to a 2/3 position.

Because the SDMT members knew in advance that financial constraints might (and did) limit the School Board's funding of staffing requests, they prioritized the positions. In fact, these priorities guided the Board.

The high school SDMT emphasized that the public is welcome to review their minutes and/or attend meeting at the high school library.

Coffee will be provided.

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