

Case Study

Newark Valley Central School District

Avoiding emotional debate when setting priorities and making resource allocation decisions is often difficult. A recent comprehensive district educational planning event at Newark Valley Central School (NV) demonstrates that a few simple techniques can replace positional argument with rational, collegial decision-making. The NV team was charged with designing K-12 ELA strategies to meet the New Standards.

Building a learning organization

Key to effective decision-making is a thorough information scan that

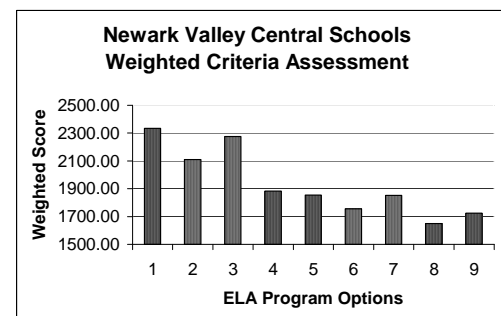
- Builds a common knowledge base among team members and
- Allows the team to clarify basic assumptions before they feel pressured to make a decision.

The twenty team members researched and made presentations on remedial models, school readiness, effective teaching practices, successful schools, NV's current ELA program and student performance, among others.

Efficient decision-making

Armed with this shared knowledge, the team was primed for an efficient one-day planning meeting where they

- Generated 21 possible K-12 ELA program options
- Identified and weighted six criteria for selecting from among those options
- Assessed the top nine options against those criteria using the CoNexus[®] decision matrix
- Unanimously agreed to assign district resources of time, people and budget to four of the nine options. (See graph and chart at right.)



CoNexus[®] decision matrix

The NV team used radio response keypads to weight criteria using a paired comparison analysis. The weighted criteria were then dropped across the top of a decision matrix with the nine program options listed down the side.

The team then assessed each option against each criterion in a 1 to 9 vote. CoNexus[®] displayed the results of each vote in a histogram. If there was disagreement, the group discussed the results and revoted.

After the group voted that last cell in the matrix, CoNexus[®] displayed the final raw and weighted results. Because the group had resolved most issues during the information scan, the weighting of criteria and the matrix vote, they moved quickly and unanimously to agreement.

Strong consensus

According to NV Superintendent Meg Grant, “CoNexus[®] provided an effective, efficient process that enabled a group with diverse backgrounds to reach consensus on prioritized strategies.”