

## Staying Connected

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### Welcome new clients

Westwood International for work with Johnson & Johnson, The Magellan Foundation, Ithaca City School District, Lansing Central School District, TST BOCES, Rural Schools Association of NYS, NYS Association of Incarcerated Education Programs, Inc., CCSD Federal Credit Union.

### Reply® Worldwide

Prism has upgraded its group decision support system hardware. "Now that we're using the more robust and ergonomic Reply® Worldwide keypads, group votes advance flawlessly and virtually as fast as participants can make decisions," said Sean Brady.

### Dropout prevention

Prism has provided group decision support to nearly 100 school and BOCES teams at regional dropout prevention workshops sponsored by the Rural Schools Association of NYS.

### UMM Board

Sean Brady has been appointed president of the United Medical Management Board of Directors.

### On the web

Visit [www.prismdecision.com](http://www.prismdecision.com) for the latest news, services, and resources.

### Our passion

Organizations often struggle through planning or decision-making. Planning teams experience conflict, fail to reach explicit agreement, end frustrated and finish drained.

Prism's client teams are engaged, have fun, move quickly and reach consensus. They emerge refreshed, energized and committed to a plan that will take them from where they are to where they want to be.

### Your preferred future

Our passion is to maximize the human potential of client groups to make and implement decisions that achieve their preferred future.

### School benchmarking

Prism has partnered with Idea Sciences, Inc. to introduce [schoolbenchmarking.com](http://schoolbenchmarking.com). Users of this service can find benchmark or best-in-class schools that act as models to help them

- Set and justify aggressive improvement targets
- Seek the programs, strategies and practices necessary to achieve those targets

[schoolbenchmarking.com](http://schoolbenchmarking.com) uses Frontier Analyst® to measure how well a school performs across a variety of performance indicators versus the levels of resources it



### Solutions

- Strategic planning
- School improvement planning
- Benchmarking
- Alliance management
- General decision support
- Training

### Tools

- Group decision support systems for face-to-face sessions
- [schoolbenchmarking.com](http://schoolbenchmarking.com) to find benchmark or best-in-class schools
- Frontier Analyst® to benchmark, measure organizational efficiency and set performance targets
- Concept Systems® for web-based focus groups and planning

### Johnson & Johnson

Westwood International's Greg Zlevor partnered with Prism's Sean Brady and Strategic Initiative's Chuck Anders to provide group decision support to Johnson & Johnson's corporate quality control group in a recent meeting of 20 international vice presidents.

consumes and/or the challenges it faces. Schools that lead the way in their ability to produce results given the resources they consume and the challenges they face are identified as benchmark schools. The model matches all other schools to a custom subset of these benchmark schools.

In opening remarks to the January 2006 Arizona Department of Education's *Determined to Succeed* conference, State Superintendent Tom Horne said of Frontier Analyst®: "We are now able to scientifically identify best-in-class schools." Maggie Mangini, Director, Bureau of Education Research at Arizona State University, adds that Frontier Analyst® is "the GPS for K-12 education in Arizona."

[schoolbenchmarking.com](http://schoolbenchmarking.com) now provides customized benchmarking services to thousands of schools for the Arizona Department of Education and for New York's The Magellan Foundation.

## Multi-criteria decision making

According to Kim Fontana, Director Staff Development and Research, Ithaca City School District (ICSD), “Both teachers and administrators said they could not remember a decision-making process that went as smoothly or that resulted in as great a commitment to the outcome.”

ICSD needed to select an early literacy assessment. There were eight literacy assessments being considered and little apparent agreement regarding which best supported teaching and learning.

### Decision matrix

The 40 member team agreed to a set of decision criteria and weighted them using [Prism’s group decision support system](#). They then assessed how well each literacy assessment contributed to each criterion in a 1 to 9 vote.

Each vote’s result was displayed in a histogram. The group discussed the vote range. Where the range indicated disagreement, they shared additional information and clarified their assumptions. In most cases, they then re-voted the cell and narrowed the range.

After the group voted the last cell, the decision matrix displayed each literacy assessment’s total worth (the sum of the raw scores times the criterion weights).

### Strong consensus

The results of the multiple criteria decision matrix assessment were compelling for the group. After reviewing the final results, they quickly reached very strong consensus support for selecting one early literacy assessment.

Reading teacher Carol Cedarholm commented: “I was impressed with how Sean Brady’s facilitation and the use of the technology helped everyone to share experiences, opinions and information about all of the tests in a respectful and

## Optimal thinking tips

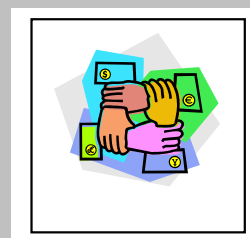
Do you find yourself frustrated in meetings? Do you leave them drained and tired? Very often, meetings are overrun with the unproductive discussion of disagreement. This is not a necessary attribute of any meeting.

### Consensus

Consensus is simply defined as an agreement where all parties can live with and will publicly support a decision. Very often in meetings, there is consensus support for a decision but no one realizes it. Consequently, debate continues unnecessarily. Participants quibble over insignificant details, go “round-and-round” on an issue and become frustrated.

### The check

At your next meeting, try a new approach. As the group moves to decision-making, test the level of consensus. Ask: To what degree do you support the proposed decision? Use this scale: 5 = Strong support, 4 = Support, 3 = Can live with/will publicly support, 2 = Still have questions, 1 = Cannot support.



### Productive discussion of disagreement

If everyone votes a 3, 4 or 5, Presto! You have a decision and you have avoided *unproductive* discussion of disagreement. If someone votes a 2, the group listens respectfully and answers the question. If someone votes a 1, there will now be *targeted and productive* discussion of disagreement. The group listens empathically and then problem solves to enrich the decision until they can bring the dissenting member into the group’s consensus. When all vote a 3, 4 or 5, the group can leave the meeting refreshed, energized and committed to a path forward!

constructive manner. The process allowed accurate information to be shared and limited the effect of politics and ego on decision making.”

## Sample engagements

Albany City School District  
 Arizona Department of Education  
 Arizona State University  
 Binghamton City School District  
 Blue Marble Corporation  
 Broome-Tioga, Dutchess, Herkimer, SCT, SW and TST BOCES  
 Chenango Forks Central School District  
 Columbia-Green, DOT, First Heritage. GHS and CCSD Federal Credit Unions  
 Greater Boston Visitor & Conv. Bureau  
 Greenberg 7 Central School District  
 Irma S. Mann Strategic Marketing  
 Ithaca City School District  
 Johnson & Johnson  
 Litton-Tasc, Inc.  
 Mercy Health System of Philadelphia  
 National Institute for Health  
 New York State Education Department  
 New York State Electric & Gas  
 Oswego City School District  
 Rural Schools Association of NYS  
 Science Applications International Corp.  
 Springville-Griffith Institute  
 Standard & Poors, Inc.  
 Syracuse University  
 Telcordia Technologies  
 The Los Angeles Times  
 The Magellan Foundation  
 Three Village Central School District  
 Times Mirror Company  
 United Health Services, Inc.  
 United Medical Associates  
 Washington, DC Metro Transit Authority  
 Westwood International  
 Whitney Point Central School District

**Multiple Criteria Decision Matrix**

	Criterion A	Criterion B	Criterion C	Criterion D	Worth
Lit Assess 1					Sum of Weighted Scores
Lit Assess 2					
Lit Assess 3					
	Criteria Weights				

Contribution of Literacy Assessments to Weighted Criteria

Ms. Cedarholm continues: “Because of the thoroughness and integrity of the process, I have confidence that we have made a decision that will improve instruction and learning. This conversation was truly one that held the best interests of children’s learning at the core.”