

STEERING COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Overview

The Steering Committee for a P-TECH 9-14 school is responsible for creating a shared vision for the school, and helping to bring that vision to fruition by collaborating and building consensus among the partner organizations. The Steering Committee monitors the progress of the school, identifies opportunities to support it, and troubleshoots challenges as they arise. The Steering Committee should include representatives from each of the school’s partners, including the principal, the school district, the College Partner, the Employer Partner, and any intermediary organization that works directly with the partners to support the school. The Steering Committee may also include teachers, parents and students where applicable and appropriate. The commitment to serve on the Steering Committee is a long-term one for each partner, though the terms of individual members may vary.

It is important that each partner appoint a well-informed person with decision-making authority to sit on the Steering Committee. This is crucial, as questions will arise that directly affect students’ programs and outcomes and the persons sitting at the table should be well-positioned to speak for their side of the partnership.

It is also important that each partner bring both a realistic and an aspirational sense of their commitment to the Steering Committee. Each College, Employer, and School District partner is accustomed to working within its own norms and culture and is used to a clearly defined “scope of authority.” In a P-TECH 9-14 school, this authority becomes shared, and each partner will need to be able to compromise, and in some cases, create entirely new structures in order to support students.

Understanding Partner Roles, Autonomy, & Shared Decision-making

To fully understand the perspective that each partner brings to the Steering Committee, it may be helpful to determine the elements which are governed by shared decision-making authority and which are determined by a single partner. One way for Steering Committee members can think about this distinction is to ask: what is under the control of each partner, and where do each partners’ interests lie. The chart below provides a partial example of the elements that the College partner has oversight of, and others that they would like to understand or contribute to.

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College Partner Span of Control/Interest

CONTROL

- Degree requirements and granting of degrees
- College classes: curriculum, credits, hours, staffing
- Use of college space
- Scheduling of college classes (time, space, semester)
- How professors are paid, evaluated, hired
- How student grades are determined
- Employs the EC Liaison
- Entrance requirements for college classes, including scores, prerequisites, type of course

INTEREST

- Content and rigor of high school coursework and student preparation
- School schedule (hours, blocks of time)
- Student performance and outcomes, test score and grades
- Discipline and tone at school
- Eligibility criteria for entry level positions within the specified field
- Key workplace skills needed for success in the field

Prior to establishing a charter for a Steering Committee, it may be helpful to complete a similar chart for each organization. The partners can then work together to identify areas for shared decision-making, potential collaboration, and areas that might cause confusion or conflict among members. The mutual understanding developed in this type of process will be beneficial as the Steering Committee evolves to meet the needs of the school.

It may also be helpful to outline policies and agencies that may affect decision-making by the Steering Committee. For example, districts and states may have policies that determine requirements for CTE schools, or states may have guidelines for dual credit/dual enrollment programs. Although the Steering Committee may be aligned around specific issues, the committee may not have the authority to change policies that have been established by other entities.

Understanding these partner roles at the outset has the potential to alleviate conflict among members of the committee because each person's role can be clearly defined, according to the partner organization that he/she is a part of. Finally, having a discussion among Steering Committee members about decision-making will allow for the committee to discuss the elements of a charter agreement.

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Establishing a Steering Committee Charter

The Steering Committee should work together to create a charter, with goals, norms, and guiding principles negotiated and recorded.

Because each P-TECH 9-14 school will be unique, it is key that members of each Steering Committee generate their own charter and norms.

In the end, the charter should be familiar to all members and be actively used and referenced throughout the work of supporting the school.

Each charter should contain a negotiated version of the following:

- Mission and Purpose - A concise statement that covers the overall goals that will guide the work of the steering committee and decision making.
- Scope of Authority - This refers to the parameters of this body, which determine each member's sphere of influence and what they are able to leverage and influence within their own organizations. See also Protocol in Implementation section below.
- Committee Norms and Procedures - To ensure that the Steering Committee's work aligns with its mission and stays within its scope of authority, the charter should determine:
 - Who is responsible for scheduling and disseminating information about meetings;
 - Who is responsible for developing meeting agendas, facilitating meetings, and keeping an disseminating meeting minutes;
 - The annual calendar of Steering Committee meetings and other key events (e.g., staff retreats, student ceremonies, etc.);
 - How important decisions will be made; i.e., by majority vote or by consensus;
 - The process for escalating and resolving disputes;
 - The process for reviewing data about student outcomes and partner activities within the school.

Membership - A clear description of membership responsibilities, which include:

- Distributed membership representation that includes all key stakeholder groups and ensures equitable representation;
- Defined process to determine leadership roles (e.g., committee chair/co-chair); and the length of term for each role;
- Contingency plan for inconsistent attendance, prolonged absences, and resignation or removal of committee members;
- Process for developing working groups or subcommittees.

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Objectives and Work Timeline

The Steering Committee should be actively involved in decision-making about the following issues:

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1. Defining measures of student success that are clear, benchmarked, and scheduled for active, regular review;
2. Developing and refining of the school's scope and sequence of high school and college coursework, workplace learning experiences, internships and apprenticeships, including the sequence of important assessments (e.g., state tests or the SAT) ;
3. Reviewing student performance data from high school and college courses, and internship performance;
4. Reviewing and refining eligibility benchmarks for college courses, workplace experiences, internships, as appropriate;
5. Reviewing the quality and availability of workplace learning activities, including reviewing and career-focused coursework, recruiting and monitoring internship host sites, and recruiting and supporting mentors;
6. Identifying extracurricular and curricular supports for students, including tutoring and other industry specific programming, including supports for special education and ELL students;
7. Ensuring alignment between industry trends, employer needs and academic coursework in the college and high school;
8. Monitoring advising structures for students within the program, and addressing advising "off-ramps" for students leaving the program;

For more information about the P-TECH 9-14 model, please visit ptech.org