



Schools Uniting Neighborhoods Advisory Group Models

There are many different ways to organize a SUN School Advisory Group. This list describes three common models.

New groups are encouraged to use these descriptions as a starting point. As you read these descriptions think about what you want from your Advisory Group. Then design a model that will work for your school.

1. SMALL ADVISORY GROUP

In this model, a core group of 5-7 people meets regularly throughout the year. Their role is to work closely with the SUN Manager to set priorities, plan activities, bring in new resources and evaluate the program.

In some schools, the School Site Council also serves as the SUN Advisory Group. At other schools, the Advisory Group may focus on one aspect of the SUN Program, such as community partnerships.

Additional people may serve as informal advisors to this group. These informal advisors may be called on by the SUN Manager, or be asked to join individual meetings to discuss specific topics.

Advantages:

- Small group size allows for focused discussions.
- The group is often made up of people who are already actively involved, who know the program well, and who are willing to make a substantial time commitment.
- The group is easy to organize.

Issues to Consider:

- Offers limited perspectives. Small groups often have more representation from one group (such as service providers); other voices may be missing.
- A small group may not have all the information needed to discuss issues in depth.

2. TWO-LAYERED ADVISORY GROUP

This model has a core group of 5-7 meeting regularly, as in Model #1. In addition, a larger group of advisors comes together 2-3 times a year.

The larger group of advisors may be asked to focus on specific topics, such as evaluating the SUN Program at the end of the year, or brainstorming ideas for the future. The core group of advisors would then take those ideas to the next level and think about how to act on them.

Advantages:

- Allows the core group to have focused planning discussions.
- Provides opportunities for a larger group of people to contribute ideas and feedback.
- Requires a smaller commitment from people who are less actively involved in the program or who are unable to meet regularly.

Issues to Consider:

- More complicated to organize.
- Some partners may feel less involved in program planning.

3. LARGE ADVISORY GROUP

The third model is a large Advisory Group that meets regularly throughout the year. These Advisory Groups have representation from a broad range of people involved in the SUN School, including: students, parents, teachers, building staff, service providers, business people, and others.

Advantages:

- Brings all interested parties around the table.
- Offers diverse perspectives on program planning.
- People are able to build relationships between different groups (for example, between students and service providers).
- Is more representative of the school environment.
- A wide range of issues can be addressed.

Issues to Consider:

- The size of the group can make focused conversations difficult.
- It can be hard to set priorities for the Advisory Group if each person has a separate agenda.
- Attendance tends to vary from meeting to meeting. There may be a lack of continuity and the group may end up repeating conversations.