Strategies for Building Consensus
(Source: SCC Handbook II, 2008)

SCCs have an added responsibility of garnering the support of the school’s community. Ultimately the council may make the final decision, but to truly involve the community, open school community meetings to share information, listen to concerns and to solicit the support of the school’s community become an important function of a council.

♦ “How” these school community meetings are conducted will determine whether the council gets the participation from its community that is desired. The usual way is to have one person in the front of the room explain the proposal, followed by a question and answer period by the entire group. This method favors only the “brave and verbal.”

♦ An effective way to conduct school community meetings is to present the proposal and then break up into small groups with facilitators who are given specific questions to focus the discussion. These groups should be made up of mixed role group members to obtain diversity of perspectives. After about 40 minutes of discussion in small groups, each small group reports to the large group the essence of their conversation. This sharing is an important part of this process because it begins to not only honor diverse opinions, but also may begin to confirm that people have similar concerns. These objectives would not be realized in the traditional handling of a public discussion.

♦ Several school community meetings may be needed if the issue is particularly controversial. Keeping a running record of concerns expressed and solutions offered will keep a “Johnny come lately” from rehashing a concern that may have already been resolved.