

Tips for Building Consensus

Even in reading that last line, you might be thinking: *Of course we need to agree? Isn't that the whole purpose of giving the summative on the same day?* The issue isn't with the word agree, it's our assumption that when we make decisions with teacher groups it needs to be in agreement. The faulty thinking of *decision = agree*. I contend there is another option, and it often is a better one: building consensus.

With trying to build consensus, I use the operational definition of "I can live with it." Now consider the word **agree**: a connotation with this word is that each person has the power to advance the agreement or thwart it. Imagine it's a teacher work day and a group of four people are going to get in a car to go grab lunch.

Teacher 1: Shall we do Chinese today? Who's good for that?

Teacher 2: Sounds good.

Teacher 3: Yes - yummy.

Teacher 4: No.

If they plan to go in one car, they do not have agreement, and they need to start over.

As teacher leaders, when our groups make decisions, it is important to cast the decision in one of those two lights: agreement or building consensus. They require different dispositions, and often, different processes, in order to achieve the goal. In building consensus, I often use a [Fist to Five Voting Technique](#), which often helps a group make a decision in a far more efficient way than if we kept trying to convince each other to change our minds. In my experience, there are far fewer times when agreement is really needed; in most things we can "live with" consensus.