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While I am sure some of tonight's speakers will want to discuss specifics of the current assignment plan, I would like to discuss the decision making process.

Over the past month or so, the community conversation coming to the board highlighted the conflict over what this plan should look like, who it should serve and how, and whether to review and adjust the plan, or to let it stand as is. There has been much discussion about who is affected and how they feel; about what some of you have heard and what some of you favor.

If we decide according to what we hear, we have to ask ourselves if we have heard all voices. If we decide according to our own opinion we have to ask ourselves compared to what? Because we cannot possibly hear all voices, and because our own opinions carry limited perspectives, we have to utilize a formal and professional model of decision-making. Otherwise, we end up with popularity contests by the loudest voices, or brainstorming from the most influential that define decisions that affect thousands.

For the benefit of all stakeholders, decision-making needs to be seen as following best practice research. It should not have the appearance, nor the effect, of popularity and opinion, nor politics and bias. A formal and widely successful model of decision-making is TQM ... Total Quality Management ... the system that revitalized Japan's national economy in the late 70's. It is considered to be a global model for quality decision-making driven by the following constructs:

* First, decisions are **data-driven** ... and that means data about researched programs **for** the district not just data **about** the district

* Second, decision makers operate through **collaboration**, as teamwork **AND** transparency allows ALL stakeholders to be heard, and the rationale and data for all decisions to be seen publicly

* And finally, decisions focus on **improvement** ... instead of innovation, where you try something just because it's new and different

So, "DCI" ... data, collaboration, and improvement ... is about quality decision-making. Applying these three constructs to our current issues will always get us the best for our clients ... the students.

When you decide according to voices and influence you might give people what they want, but not necessarily what they need. That is expedient management. Employing TQM is effective leadership.