Vision, Values, and Ground Rules

Few forces are as powerful as shared vision...what is most important is that it is genuinely shared...and creates a common identity among diverse people.
It is not what the vision is, but what the vision does. (Peter Senge, 2000)

1. CHECK-IN: Each person has a chance to share his or her ideas about what a successful school growth team can be or do.

2. VALUES...Each team member states an important principle, issue, or value about the teamwork experience and about the work of the school growth planning team (e.g., respect diversity, learner-focused, joyful, makes a difference...).

3. VISION...Take the values discussed in # 2 and create a statement that captures the spirit of what the team will achieve together.

4. GROUND RULES...Establish a set of simple ground rules* or norms for how you will operate, make decisions and treat one another (e.g., start on time, cell phones off, focus on task...).

It may be helpful to start with these prompts:

It is okay for our group to…………………………………………………

It is not okay for our group to ………………………………………….

Our group focus is always……………………………………………..

5. Communications
The team needs to establish how the team will communicate with the staff and community and who will be responsible. This will include the strategies that will be used to seek input from everyone in the community, staff, parents, First Nations, and students.

6. DEALING WITH ELEPHANTS AND PARKING LOTS
Relationships between team members change over time. As any team or group begins its work together, there will be a period where individual members discover how they fit together.

As the team works together, there will be areas of disagreement. Sometimes people "take sides" or defend a particular position. What is important is for the group to realize is that disagreement is part of group development. How disagreement is handled will determine the success of the group and the work they are doing.

Failure to honestly share concerns and opinions will leave the group stuck without a way to move forward or come to consensus.

Which leads to elephants and parking lots…….
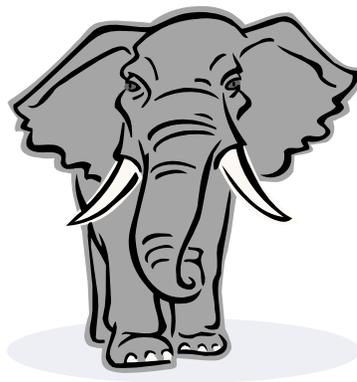
An elephant is a topic that everyone knows is a problem but no one is willing to address. When the real debate and discussion about an issue takes place after the meeting in the parking lot or at the local coffee shop rather than at the meeting it has become an elephant.

Failure to have a process to bring the elephant or any important issues to the whole group means that the group will become fragmented and not complete the task to everyone's satisfaction which may jeopardize the hoped for results for the learners in the school.

So.

How will disagreements be handled?

What will be the process used?

Does the group have a commitment to work through problems in order to reach consensus?

What will the groups do if they cannot agree?

Note: An excellent resource for teamwork, with information on setting ground rules is
The Handbook for Smart School Teams (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002, NES)