



## School Councils: Organization and Procedures

### In this section:

Georgia School Council Fact Sheet.....	5.1
Georgia School Council Law 2007 .....	5.3
Additional Legal References to School Councils .....	5.7
School Council Model Bylaws.....	5.10
Election Procedures.....	5.15
School Council Nomination Form .....	5.16
Parliamentary Procedure for School Councils .....	5.17
Open Meetings Act .....	5.19
Open Records Act .....	5.21
Sample Council Meeting Agenda .....	5.23
Getting to Know Your School.....	5.24
School Tour .....	5.24
School Data.....	5.25
Role in the Principal Selection Process .....	5.27
Guidelines for Interviewing Principals.....	5.30
Principal Interview Questions .....	5.32
Are School Councils Working? .....	5.33
Assessing the School Council's Effectiveness.....	5.35
Worksheet: Self Assessment Questionnaire.....	5.36
Effective Meetings .....	5.37
Meeting Evaluation Form.....	5.38
School Council Compliance Checklist .....	5.39



**Notes**



## Georgia School Council Fact Sheet

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 – 86

### Why were School Councils Established?

Georgia's *A+ Education Reform Act of 2000* required that school councils be established at every public school by October 1, 2003. School councils are policy-level advisory bodies to the Principal, Superintendent, and local board of education. They may advise and make recommendations on any matter related to school improvement and student achievement. The purpose of school councils is to "bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation to solve difficult education problems, improve academic achievement, provide support for teachers and administrators, and bring parents into the school-based decision-making process."

### Who Serves on a School Council?

**The 2007 General Assembly made changes to the school council law that requires parents to be the majority members. It still, however, allows flexibility in the membership of a school council.**

**At a minimum, a School Council is composed of seven members:**

- The Principal
- Two certificated teachers elected by the teachers
- Four parents (or guardians) elected by the parents; two of the parents must be businesspersons
- Two businesspersons, selected according to the school council's bylaws

**The school council may, within its bylaws, increase the number of members as long as the parents remain the majority. Staff members, students, and members of school-related organizations such as the PTA/PTO may also be members and are selected according to the school council's bylaws. Other businesspersons from the community may serve on the council as specified in the bylaws. The school council shall select the businesspersons to serve.**

### What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members?

**All members of the School Council must:**

- Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues,
- Regularly participate in council meetings,
- Participate in information and training programs,
- Act as a link between the school council and the community,
- Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community, and
- Work to improve student achievement and performance.

**"The councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education and local school superintendent on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement, including, but not limited to, the following:"**

- School board policies;
- School improvement plans;
- Curriculum and assessments;
- Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement;
- Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the council to describe the academic performance, academic progress, services, awards, interventions, environment, and other such data as the council deems appropriate;
- School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans;
- School-community communication strategies;
- Methods of involving parents and the community;
- Extracurricular activities in the school;



- School-based and community services;
- Community use of school facilities;
- Student discipline and attendance;
- Reports from the school principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, including progress within specific grade levels and subject areas and by school personnel; and
- The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students.

### **How do School Councils Conduct Business?**

- All meetings are open to the public.
- School councils must meet four or more times a year as stated in their bylaws.
- A quorum, which is a majority of the members, must be present at the meeting.
- The council may appoint committees, study groups, and task forces.
- Meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act.
- Records are subject to the Open Records Act.

### **What is the Role of the Local Board of Education with School Councils?**

#### **The local board of education shall:**

- Provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including but not limited to, school site budget and expenditure information and class sizes by grade.
- Designate an employee of the school system to attend council meetings when requested.
- Receive and review the school council's annual report.
- The central administration shall respond to requests for information from a school council.

#### **The local board of education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, as follows:**

- Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports or recommendations;
- Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to such local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a school council report or recommendation;
- The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or recommendation; and
- The local board of education shall respond to each recommendation of the school council within 60 calendar days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

### **Are School Council Members Required to Have Training?**

The law requires each local board of education to provide a training program to address the organization of school councils; their purpose and responsibilities; applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures; important state and local school system program requirements; and a model school council organization plan. The law also requires that additional training programs be offered to school council members annually to assist school council members in the performance of their duties. State Board rule 160-3-3-.04 allows professional learning funds to be used for school council training.



## Georgia School Council Law 2007

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 – Establishment of school councils

- (a) The General Assembly recognizes the need to improve communication and participation of parents and the community in the management and operation of local schools. The General Assembly believes that parent and community support is critical to the success of students and schools. The intent of this article is to bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation to solve difficult education problems, improve academic achievement, provide support for teachers and administrators, and bring parents into the school-based decision-making process. The establishment of school councils is intended to help local boards of education develop and nurture participation, bring parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators to create a better understanding of and mutual respect for each other's concerns, and share ideas for school improvement. School councils shall be reflective of the school community.
- (b) The management and control of public schools shall be the responsibility of local boards of education, and the school leader shall be the principal. School councils shall provide advice, recommendations, and assistance and represent the community of parents and businesses. Each member of the council, as a community representative, shall be accorded the respect and attention deserving of such election.

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 – Requirements of school councils

- (a) By October 1, 2001, each local board of education that elects to participate in the Quality Basic Education Program provided for in Article 6 of this chapter shall have a school council operational at a minimum of one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school, except that if a school system does not have its schools organized in this manner the system shall designate schools for a school council as closely to the intent of this Code section as possible. By October 1, 2002, each local board of education shall have a school council operational in a minimum of 50 percent of the schools under its jurisdiction. Such school council shall operate pursuant to this Code section, and the local board of education shall assist all councils in their creation and operation. After two years of successful operation, and upon receiving a high performance designation by the Office of Student Achievement, the local board of education shall devolve to the school council such additional authority in matters of school operation as the local board deems appropriate. By October 1, 2003, each local board of education shall have a school council operational in each of the schools under its jurisdiction. Local boards of education may by board policy allow an alternative to a school council at a charter school, an alternative school, or a psychoeducation center if another governance body or advisory council exists that performs a comparable function.
- (b) The local board of education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and to assist school councilmembers in the performance of their duties. Such program shall address the organization of councils, their purpose and responsibilities, applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures, and important state and local school system program requirements and shall provide a model school council organization plan. Additional training programs shall be offered to school councilmembers annually. The State Board of Education shall develop and make available a model school council training program.
- (c) Any member may withdraw from the council by delivering to the council a written resignation and submitting a copy to the secretary of the council or school principal. Should school councilmembers determine that a member of the council is no longer active in the council as defined by the bylaws of the council, the council may, by a majority vote, withdraw such person's membership status, effective as of a date determined by the council.
- (d) The property and business of the council shall be managed by a minimum of seven school councilmembers of whom a majority shall constitute a quorum. The number of councilmembers shall be specified in the council's bylaws. Members of the school council shall include:
  - (1) A number of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students, so that such parents or guardians make up a majority of the council and at least two of whom shall be businesspersons;



- (2) At least two certificated teachers, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions, who are employed at least four of the six school segments at the school;
- (3) The school principal; and
- (4) Other members as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school related organizations. Other businesspersons from the local business community may serve on the council and shall be selected by the other members of the school council. Selection procedures for these members and the business members shall be specified in the council's bylaws.

An employee of the local school system may serve as a parent representative on the council of a school in which his or her child is enrolled if such employee works at a different school. With the exception of the principal and the business representatives, members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

- (e) Members of the council shall serve for a term of two years or for such other term as may be specified in the council's bylaws, except as provided in this subsection. The terms of the councilmembers shall be staggered. Upon the expiration of the terms of the two businessperson councilmembers in office on July 1, 2007, these member positions shall subsequently be filled by parent councilmembers; provided, however, that additional businesspersons may serve on the council if provided for in the council's bylaws in accordance with paragraph (4) of subsection (d) of this Code section. Councilmembers may serve more than one term. The office of school councilmember shall be automatically vacated:
  - (1) If a member shall resign;
  - (2) If the person holding the office is removed as a member by an action of the council pursuant to this Code section; or
  - (3) If a member no longer meets the qualifications specified in this Code section.

An election within the electing body for a replacement to fill the remainder of an unexpired term shall be held within 30 days, unless there are 90 days or less remaining in the term in which case the vacancy shall remain unfilled.

- (f) All meetings of the school council shall be open to the public. The council shall meet at least four times annually and the number of meetings shall be specified in the council's bylaws. The council shall also meet at the call of the chairperson, or at the request of a majority of the members of the council. Notice by mail shall be sent to school councilmembers at least seven days prior to a meeting of the council and shall include the date, time, and location of the meeting. School councils shall be subject to Chapter 14 of Title 50, relating to open and public meetings, in the same manner as local boards of education. Each member is authorized to exercise one vote. A quorum must be present in order to conduct official council business. Members of the council shall not receive remuneration to serve on the council or its committees.
- (g) After providing public notice at least two weeks before the meeting of each electing body, the principal of each school shall call a meeting of electing bodies for the purpose of selecting members of the school council as required by this Code section. The electing body for the parent members shall consist of all parents and guardians eligible to serve as a parent member of the school council, and the electing body for the teacher members shall consist of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as a teacher member of the school council. The school council shall specify in its bylaws the month in which elections are to be held and shall specify a nomination and election process.
- (h) The school council shall adopt such bylaws as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the council. The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires a two-thirds affirmative vote. The State Board of Education shall develop and make available model school council bylaws.
- (i) The school council shall have the same immunity as the local board of education in all matters directly related to the functions of the council.
- (j)
  - (1) The officers of the school council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the council shall be elected by the council at the first meeting of the council following the election of school councilmembers; provided, however, that the chairperson shall be a parent member. The officers of the council shall hold office for the term specified in the council's bylaws.



- (2) The vice chairperson shall, in the absence or disability of the chairperson, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson and shall perform such other duties as shall be required by the council.
- (3) The secretary shall attend all meetings, act as clerk of the council, and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose. The secretary shall give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the council
- (k) The members of the school council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:
  - (1) Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
  - (2) Regularly participate in council meetings;
  - (3) Participate in information and training programs;
  - (4) Act as a link between the school council and the community;
  - (5) Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
  - (6) Work to improve student achievement and performance.
- (l) The minutes of the council shall be made available to the public, for inspection at the school office, and shall be provided to the councilmembers, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes within 20 days following each council meeting. All school councils shall be subject to Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50, relating to the inspection of public records, in the same manner as local boards of education.
- (m) At all meetings of the council every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.
- (n) The term of office of all councilmembers shall begin and end on the dates specified in the council's bylaws.
- (o) The council may appoint committees, study groups, or task forces for such purposes as it deems helpful and may utilize existing or new school advisory groups.
- (p) The local board of education shall provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including school site budget and expenditure information and site average class sizes by grade, to the council as requested or as required by state law or state board rule. The local board shall also designate an employee of the school system to attend council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to questions the council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board. The central administration shall be responsive to requests for information from a school council.
- (q) The local board of education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, as follows:
  - (1) Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports or recommendations;
  - (2) Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to a local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a council report or recommendation; and
  - (3) The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or recommendation. The local board of education shall respond to recommendations of the school council within 60 days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.
- (r) The school principal shall have the following duties pertaining to school council activities:
  - (1) Cause to be created a school council pursuant to this Code section by convening the appropriate bodies to select school councilmembers; setting the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notifying all school councilmembers of the same;
  - (2) Perform all of the duties required by law and the bylaws of the council;
  - (3) Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the local school superintendent and inform the council of responses or actions of the local school superintendent;
  - (4) Develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval; and



- (5) Aid in the development of the agenda for each meeting of the council after taking into consideration suggestions of councilmembers and the urgency of school matters. An item may be added to the agenda at the request of three or more councilmembers.
- (s) School councils are advisory bodies. The councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education and local school superintendent on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (1) School board policies;
  - (2) School improvement plans;
  - (3) Curriculum and assessments;
  - (4) Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement;
  - (5) Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the council to describe the academic performance, academic progress, services, awards, interventions, environment, and other such data as the council deems appropriate;
  - (6) School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans;
  - (7) School-community communication strategies;
  - (8) Methods of involving parents and the community;
  - (9) Extracurricular activities in the school;
  - (10) School-based and community services;
  - (11) Community use of school facilities;
  - (12) Student discipline and attendance;
  - (13) Reports from the school principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, including progress within specific grade levels and subject areas and by school personnel; and
  - (14) The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students.
- (t) The role of the school council in the principal selection process shall be determined in policy written by the local board of education.





## Additional Legal References to School Councils

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-167:

(e) No later than October 1, 2005, the State Board of Education shall develop rules and regulations requiring that each local board of education provide information as specified by the state board and which is not specifically made confidential by law, including school site budget and expenditure information and site average class size by grade, to members of the **school council** and the general public.

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-182:

(2) Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, each local board of education shall be allowed to exceed maximum class sizes set by the state board pursuant to this paragraph for general education programs in mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts for grades 9 through 12 and may establish such maximum class sizes that shall not exceed the funding class size by more than 39 percent and shall annually report to the state board and to each school council in its school system such class sizes established

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-212.5:

(e) As part of its review of a school improvement plan, the **school council** at each school is authorized to request and receive data from the school relative to the school's utilization of an academic coach and whether such use of an academic coach has led to increased academic performance.

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-271:

(b) By July 1, 2002, each regional educational service agency shall introduce and provide core services for member local school systems and schools and provide core services for purchase by local school systems and schools which are not members of that regional educational service agency. These core services shall include the following:

- (1) Training and assistance in teaching each subject area assessed under Code Section 20-2-281;
- (2) Assistance specifically designed for any school that is rated academically failing under Code Section 20-14-33;
- (3) Training and assistance to teachers, administrators, members of local boards of education, and members of local **school councils** on school-based decision making and control; and
- (4) Assistance in complying with applicable state laws and rules of the State Board of Education and the Educational Coordinating Council.

Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to limit the freedom of a school system or school to purchase or refuse to purchase any core service from any regional educational service agency in this state.

### O.C.G.A. § 20-2-290:

(2) The board of education of any local school system shall be authorized to employ school administrative managers in lieu of or in addition to assistant principals. Such school administrative managers shall not be required to be certificated by the Professional Standards Commission but shall have such qualifications as determined by the local board with a minimum requirement of a bachelor's degree. The duties of school administrative managers shall be to oversee and manage the financial



and business affairs of the school. The principal shall retain authority over the curriculum and instructional areas. The school administrative manager shall report directly to the principal. In the event that a local board considers hiring or utilizing school administrative managers pursuant to this subsection, it shall receive and give all due consideration to recommendations by the **school council** as to whether or not to utilize such position and as to selection of the manager. Existing employees of the local board shall be eligible to serve as school administrative managers if they meet other qualifications and requirements established by the local board for such position. For purposes of earning funds for such positions, school administrative managers shall be treated in all respects the same as assistant principals.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-14-35:**

(c) In making an on-site school performance audit, the auditor shall obtain information from administrators, teachers, and parents of students enrolled in the local school system. The audit may not be closed until information is obtained from each of those sources. The office shall adopt rules regarding obtaining information from parents and using that information in the auditor's report and obtaining information from teachers in a manner that prevents a school or school system from screening the information.

(d) The auditors shall report to the local board of education, the local **school council**, and appropriate school administrators and shall report findings and recommendations concerning any necessary improvements or intervention strategies. School audit reports shall be provided to the council and the State Board of Education.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-14-36:**

The office shall recommend, and the State Board of Education shall adopt, written procedures for conducting on-site audits under this part. The office shall make the procedures available to the schools, school councils, local boards of education, and the public. Office staff shall be trained in audit procedures and shall follow such procedures in conducting the audit.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-14-41:**

(a) The State Board of Education shall by policies, rules, or regulations establish a coherent and sustained system of assistance and support for schools not meeting identified levels of achievement or not showing specified levels of progress as determined by the office. The State Board of Education shall by policies, rules, or regulations specify appropriate levels of assistance and intervention for schools that receive an unacceptable rating on student performance for the absolute student achievement standard or on progress on improved student achievement. In specifying levels of assistance and intervention, the State Board of Education shall consider the number of years a school has received an unacceptable rating and may include one or more of the following interventions:

- (1) Issuing public notice of the deficiency to the local board of education;
- (2) Ordering a hearing to be conducted at the school by the local board of education with the participation of the **school council** for the purpose of notifying the public of the unacceptable performance, the improvements in performance expected by the office, and the interventions that may be imposed under this Code section if the performance does not improve within a designated period of time and of soliciting public comment on the initial steps being taken to improve performance;
- (3) Ordering the preparation of an intensive student achievement improvement plan that addresses each academic excellence indicator for which the school's performance is unacceptable, the submission of the plan to the State Board of Education for approval, and implementation of the plan;



(4) Appointing a Department of Education school improvement team to:

(A) Conduct a comprehensive on-site evaluation of each low-performing school to determine the cause for the school's low performance and lack of progress that includes presentations by the chairperson of the local board of education, the school principal, a parent member of the local **school council**, and other school personnel;

**State Board Rule 160-3-3-.04**

(2) PLAN FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING.

(a) Statement of Policy. The local board of education shall adopt a policy that requires the preparation and implementation of a system-level CSIP. This plan shall include comprehensive professional learning as a major component. Professional learning funds shall be used for activities that enhance the skills and knowledge of all school system personnel, school board members and **school council** members, which directly relate to improving student achievement. In addition, the policy shall require the appointment of a professional learning coordinator and the appointment of a professional learning advisory committee.

(c) Expenditures of Funds.

1. Professional learning funds may be expended for one or more of the following.

(iii) Travel for professional learning purposes.

(iv) Professional and technical service fees and expenses for instructors and consultants.

(viii) Reimbursement for expenditures of persons who successfully complete conferences, workshops or courses approved by the Professional Learning Advisory Committee.



## **(Enter School Name) School Council Bylaws**

### **Article I: Name**

A school council has been established in the **(Enter School Name)** School in the **(Enter School District)** on **(Enter Date)**. The name of this school council shall be the **(Enter School Name)** School Council, hereinafter referred to as the school council, organized under the authority of state law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 – 20-2-86).

### **Article II: Purpose**

The establishment of school councils is intended to help local boards of education by bringing parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators to create a better understanding of and mutual respect for each other's concerns and share ideas for school improvement. School councils shall represent the community of parents and businesses.

The members of the school council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:

1. Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
2. Regularly participate in school council meetings;
3. Participate in information and training programs;
4. Act as a link between the school council and the community;
5. Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
6. Work to improve student achievement and performance.

### **Article III: School Council Authority**

The school council shall advise and make recommendations to the principal, local board of education and local school superintendent on matters relating to school improvement and student achievement.

The school council shall participate in the selection of the school principal in accordance with the written policy of the local board of education.

The school council shall review and approve the school improvement plan.

The school council shall review school site budget and expenditure information, and class sizes by grade.

The school council has the authority to appoint committees, study groups, or task forces for such purposes as it deems helpful and may utilize existing or new school advisory groups.

The school council shall have the same immunity as the local board of education in all matters directly related to the functions of the school council.



## Article IV: Role of the School Council

The school council provides advice and recommendations to the school principal and, when appropriate, the local board of education and local school superintendent, on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement, including but not limited to, the following:

1. School board policies;
2. School improvement plans;
3. Curriculum and assessments;
4. Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement;
5. Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the school council to describe the academic performance, academic progress, services, awards, interventions, environment, and other such data as the school council deems appropriate;
6. School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans;
7. School-community communication strategies;
8. Methods of involving parents and the community;
9. Extracurricular activities in the school;
10. School-based and community services;
11. Community use of school facilities;
12. Student discipline and attendance;
13. Reports from the principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, including progress within specific grade levels and subject areas and by school personnel; and
14. The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students.

## Article V: Membership

Membership on the school council shall be open to principals, teachers, parents, business representatives and other such members as the school council may specify in its bylaws. Members of the school council shall not receive compensation to serve on a school council. Members of the school council shall include:

1. **(Specify at least 2)** parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding parents or guardians who are also employees of the school;
2. Two parents who are businesspersons;
3. **(Specify at least 2 but parents [#1 plus #2 above] must be the majority members)** certificated teachers who are employed at least four of the six school segments at the school, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions;
4. The school principal; and
5. **(Specify additional members, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, representatives of school related organizations, representatives of community organizations, and representatives of business entities in the community.)**

## Article VI: Terms

Council members shall be elected for two **(or for Another Number)** year terms. **(Specify how Staggered Terms will be implemented.)** Council members **(Choose One: May or May Not)** serve more than one term.



## Article VII: Elections

Elections shall take place in **(Enter Month)**.

The electing body for the parent members shall consist of all parents and guardians eligible to serve as a parent member of the school council. **(Specify Nomination and Election process if desired.)**

The electing body for the teacher members shall consist of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as a teacher member of the school council. **(Specify Nomination and Election process if desired.)**

The businesspersons shall be selected in the following manner: **(Specify Selection Process)**.

**(Specify Selection or Election process of additional members.)**

## Article VIII: Vacancies

The position of a school council member shall be automatically vacated if:

1. A member resigns by delivering a written resignation to the school council;
2. A member no longer meets the qualifications specified by law; or
3. A member is removed by an action of the school council.

The school council may by a majority vote determine a position vacant if it finds that a member of the council is no longer active in the council due to inactivity **(Define)** and **(Specify Reasons)**. The effective date of a vacancy shall be determined by the school council.

An election within the electing body for a replacement to fill the remainder of an unexpired term shall be held within 30 days, unless there are 90 calendar days or less remaining in the term in which case the vacancy shall remain unfilled.

## Article IX: Meetings

All meetings of the council shall be open to the public. The school council shall meet **(Enter Number, Must be at least 4)** times annually. The council shall also meet at the call of the chairperson, or at the request of a majority of the members of the school council.

Notice by mail shall be sent to school council members at least seven days prior to a meeting and shall include the date, time and location of the meeting. School councils shall be subject to the Open Meetings Act in the same manner as local boards of education.

The school council secretary shall be responsible for notifying, in writing, the local newspaper designated as the legal organ of the county of any and all meetings of the school council at least twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting.

A quorum must be present in order to conduct official school council business. A quorum is comprised of a majority of school council members. Every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present. Each member of the school council is authorized to exercise one vote. Proxy votes are not allowed. Members must be present in order to vote.



## Article X: Minutes

School councils shall be subject to the Opens Records Act, relating to the inspection of public records, in the same manner as local boards of education. A summary of the subjects acted on and the members present at the meeting of the school council shall be made available to the public for inspection at the school office within two business days of the meeting. The minutes shall be provided to the school council members, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes, within 20 days following each school council meeting. The official minutes shall be open to public inspection once approved by the school council immediately following the next regular meeting of the school council.

Minutes at a minimum shall include the names of the school council members present at the meeting, a description of each motion or other proposal made, and a record of all votes. In the case of a roll-call vote, the name of each school council member voting for or against a proposal or abstaining shall be recorded. In all other votes, it shall be presumed that the action taken was approved by each person in attendance unless the minutes reflect the name of the persons voting against the proposal or abstaining.

## Article XI: Officers of the School Council

The officers of the school council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the school council shall be elected at the first meeting of the school council following the election of school council members. The term of the officers of the school council shall be **(Specify Term)**.

The chairperson, which shall be a parent, shall develop the agenda for all meetings, preside at all meetings of the school council, and perform such other duties as required by law or as shall be requested by the school council.

The vice chairperson shall, in the absence of the chairperson, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson and shall perform such other duties as shall be requested by the school council.

The secretary shall act as the clerk of the school council, record all votes and minutes of all proceedings, give notice of all meetings of the school council, and shall perform such other duties as may be required by law or as shall be requested by the school council.

## Article XII: Duties of the Principal

The school principal shall have the following duties pertaining to school councils:

1. Cause to be created a school council by convening the appropriate bodies to select school council members; setting the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notifying all school council members of the same;
2. Call meetings of the electing bodies after providing public notice at least two weeks before such meetings;
3. Communicate all school council requests for information and assistance to the local school superintendent and inform the school council of responses or actions of the local school superintendent;
4. Develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval;
5. Provide progress reports regarding the school's student achievement goals; and
6. Perform all of the duties required by law and the bylaws of the council.



### **Article XIII: Board of Education Responsibilities**

The local board of education shall provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including but not limited to, school site budget and expenditure information and class sizes by grade, to the school council as requested or as required by state law or state board rule.

The local board shall designate an employee of the school system to attend school council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to questions the school council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board. The central administration shall respond to requests for information from a school council.

The local board of education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, as follows:

1. Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports or recommendations;
2. Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to such local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a school council report or recommendation;
3. The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or recommendation; and
4. The local board of education shall respond to each recommendation of the school council within 60 calendar days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

The local board of education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and to assist school council members in the performance of their duties. Such program shall address the organization of school councils; their purpose and responsibilities; applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures; important state and local school system program requirements; and a model school council organization plan.

Additional training programs shall be offered to school council members annually.

### **Article XIV: Bylaws**

The school council shall adopt the bylaws as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the school council. The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires two-thirds affirmative votes.

### **Article XV: Parliamentary Authority**

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the governing parliamentary authority for school councils in all cases applicable but not inconsistent with these bylaws.





## Election Procedures

Election and nomination procedures should be specified in the school council bylaws. Following are some points to consider in this process.

1. Decide whether all candidates must be nominated or self-nominated in writing prior to the election, if nominations will also be accepted from the floor, or if nominations will only be accepted from the floor.
2. Create an election committee to plan the election process and gather the nominations. Should committee members and their immediate family members be prohibited from running for school council?
3. The election committee should:
  - a. Provide nomination forms if that procedure is used.
  - b. Make sure all candidates accept their nomination.
  - c. Work with Principal to provide public notice of teacher and parent elections. Date, location, and time must be made public at least two weeks before the elections.
  - d. Assist in conducting the election.
4. Should candidates be given an opportunity to summarize why they want to be on the school council?
5. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, does balloting process have to be followed or can vote be by acclamation?
6. Is there a minimum number of voters required to be at the election? If fewer than that are present, what is the process?
7. Must candidates be present at the election if they have accepted the nomination?
8. Must anyone nominated from the floor be present to accept the nomination?
9. Decide who will count the ballots and how results will be reported. Determine a process to follow if the results are challenged.



## SCHOOL COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to run for an elected position as a \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent or Teacher) representative on the school council.

\_\_\_\_\_ I wish to nominate \_\_\_\_\_ for an elected position as a \_\_\_\_\_ (Parent or Teacher) representative on the school council.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Business phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe why this candidate should be on the school council.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's signature if this is a self-nomination

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nominator's signature if nominating another person

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS

School councils are similar to other small boards because they work best when discussions are informal and not constrained by the need to adhere rigidly to formal procedures. Most school councils will work in a casual, unceremonious manner. However, several sections of the law refer to quorums and votes [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (c),(d),(f),(h),(j)(3) and (m)]. When taking action on items on the agenda, the school council should have clearly outlined procedures for handling motions and taking votes. These procedures must conform to the requirements specified in law and should conform to standards that are incorporated into a parliamentary guide such as *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. This summary will focus on legal requirements mandated for school councils and suggested parliamentary procedure that school councils may follow in taking official action during meetings.

### Meetings

A quorum must be present in order to conduct official business. Quorum means a majority of members. If the school council is composed of seven members, a quorum is four members.

1. *Majority* – More than half of the school council members present representing a quorum. Except as noted below, every motion is to be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum. For example, if the school council has eleven members and six are present, a quorum exists. If two members vote “yes” on a motion, two members vote “no,” and two members abstain, the motion fails. The majority of members present (more than half) did not vote “yes” for the motion. Abstentions often can have the same effect as a vote against the motion. The adoption of bylaws or changes in the bylaws requires two-thirds affirmative votes [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (h)]. A majority vote of the school council is necessary to withdraw a school council member’s membership status due to inactivity as specified in the bylaws [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (c)].
2. *Unanimous Consent* - Rather than voting on every issue, the chairperson can ask for “unanimous consent” on items that do not seem to be controversial. This can be done by saying, “Is there any objection to .....?” If there is no objection, the action can be taken.

### Motions

A motion is a proposal by a council member that the council take certain action.

#### Main Motion

Any council member, including the chairperson, may make a main motion to introduce a subject for action. A long motion should be written and given to the chairperson. The council member who makes the motion is not required to vote in favor of it.

#### Second a Motion

Any council member may second a motion except the individual who made the motion. A second merely implies that the motion should come before the school council for discussion. The school council member who seconded a motion is not required to vote in favor of it. If a motion does not receive a second, it fails and no vote is taken. Once a main motion has been seconded, the presiding officer *states the question* (reads the motion) and indicates that it is open to debate.



### Debating a Motion

Customarily, the person who makes the motion speaks first. School council members should confine their remarks to the pending question. The chairperson may participate in the debate. When the chairperson determines that debate is ending he/she can ask, "Is there any objection to calling the question?" If there is no objection, proceed to a vote on the motion. If there is objection, the chairperson should take a vote on whether or not to end debate.

### Subsidiary Motions

Subsidiary motions are used to address or dispose of the main motion. All of these subsidiary motions require a second.

- *Amend* – Used to change the wording of the main motion. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Refer* – Used to refer a motion to a committee for study or revisions. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Postpone* – Used to delay consideration of a motion until a stated future time. Debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Lay on the Table* – Used to delay consideration of a motion until the majority decides to "take it from the table." Not debatable; requires majority vote.
- *Move the Previous Question* – Used to end debate on a motion. Not debatable; requires 2/3 vote.
- *Postpone Indefinitely* – Used to drop the main motion and avoid a vote on it. Debatable; requires majority vote.

### Incidental Motions

Incidental motions are used to address concerns and questions related to procedure.

- *Point of Order* – Used by a member to call attention to a breach of the rules. The effect is to require the chair to make a ruling on the question. If the member is dissatisfied with the result, the ruling may be appealed. An appeal motion requires a second, is debatable, and requires a majority vote.
- *Parliamentary Inquiry* – Used to request the chair's opinion on parliamentary procedure.
- *Point of Information* – Used to inquire about facts related to the business at hand.

### Voting on the motion

When the debate appears to be closing, the chair can ask "Are you ready for the question?" If no one desires further debate, the chair *puts the question* to a vote after restating the motion. The voice vote or show of hands may be used. The chairperson may participate in the vote, and members may choose to abstain from voting. Proxy voting and secret ballots are not allowed. The chairperson states the results of the vote.

If the school council is voting to go into executive session, the secretary must record the names of those school council members voting to go into executive session and the motion stating the reason that the school council is going into executive session. A majority vote is required.

Voting to adopt or amend bylaws of the council requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the council members.

For more detailed information on parliamentary procedure, visit the website for *Robert's Rules of Order* at [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com).



## OPEN MEETINGS ACT

- School Councils are subject to the Open Meetings Act [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)].
- Meeting - gathering of a quorum of the members of the school council or any committee of its members created by the school council at which any public matter, official business, or policy is to be discussed or presented or at which official action is to be taken or recommendations on any public matter, official business, or policy are to be formulated, presented or discussed.
- All meetings are open unless otherwise provided by law.
- Regular meetings of the school council
  - Announce the time, place & dates of regular meetings,
  - Information available to general public and posted and maintained in a conspicuous place available to the public at the regular meeting place,
  - Members of the school council shall be sent notice of meeting at least seven days prior to a meeting [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)], and
  - Regular meetings may be cancelled or postponed.
- Announcing the meeting of the electing bodies of the school council [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (g)]
  - Provide public notice at least two weeks before the meeting of each electing body.
- Announcing called meetings
  - Post a written notice for at least 24 hours at the place of the regular meetings,
  - Give written or oral notice at least 24 hours in advance of meeting to legal organ in the county where the meetings are to be held or to a newspaper having a general circulation in the county at least equal to that of the legal organ,
  - Members of the school council shall be sent notice of meeting at least seven days prior to a meeting [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)], and
  - In counties where legal organ is published less than four times weekly, notice shall be the posting of a written notice for at least 24 hours at the place of regular meetings and, upon written request from any local broadcast or print media outlet whose place of business and physical facilities are located in the county, notice by telephone or fax to the requesting media outlet at least 24 hours in advance of the called meeting.
- School Council agenda
  - Make available upon request the agenda of all matters expected to come before the school council prior to meeting,
  - Post agenda at the meeting site as far in advance as reasonably possible and, at a minimum, at some time during the two week period immediately prior to the meeting, and
  - Failure to include an item on the agenda which becomes necessary to address during the meeting does not prohibit the school council from considering and acting upon the item.
- Minutes & summary of meeting
  - Provide written summary of subjects acted on and school council members present to the public for inspection within two business days of adjournment of the meeting,
  - Minutes shall be promptly recorded and open to public inspection once approved as official by the school council no later than immediately following the next regular meeting of the school council,
  - Minutes may be released prior to approval of the school council,
  - Minutes must include at a minimum names of school council members present, description of each motion or other proposal made, and record of all votes,



- Minutes must reflect the name of each person voting against the proposal or abstaining or it is assumed that the action taken was approved by each school council member in attendance,
  - If the vote is a roll-call vote, name of each person voting for or against the proposal shall be recorded,
  - Minutes of school council meetings shall be made available to the public at the school office [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (l)], And
  - School Council members shall receive a copy of minutes within 20 days following each school council meeting [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86(l)].
- Visual and/or sound recording of open meetings shall be permitted.
- Meeting or portion of a meeting may be closed to the public for
- Consulting with legal counsel pertaining to pending or potential litigation, settlement, claims, administrative proceedings, or other judicial actions,
  - Discussing future acquisition of real estate,
  - Discussing or deliberating the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of an employee, and
  - Considering a matter involving the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's educational records [Family Educational Rights And Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 USC 1232g].
- Procedures for closed meeting
- Specify reason(s) for closing the meeting; must be within the exceptions listed above and recorded in the minutes,
  - Majority vote of a quorum present for the meeting must vote to close the meeting,
  - Minutes must reflect the names of the school council members present and the names of those voting to close the meeting,
  - Minutes are available to the public as are other meeting minutes,
  - Only that portion of the meeting that deals with exceptions under the law shall be closed; other portions of the meeting must be open,
  - When a meeting or portion of a meeting is closed, the chairperson of the school council shall execute and file with the minutes of the meeting a notarized affidavit stating under oath that the subject matter of the meeting of the closed portion of the meeting was devoted to matters within the exceptions provided by law and identifying the specific reason for closing the meeting,
  - Votes on personnel matters discussed during a closed session must occur in an open meeting, and
  - A meeting may not be closed in order to discuss whether or not to close a meeting.
- Violations of Open Meetings Act
- Anyone knowingly and willfully conducting or participating in a meeting in violation of the open meetings act is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, punished by a fine not to exceed \$500,
  - Superior courts have jurisdiction to enforce the open meetings law; attorney general has the authority to bring law enforcement actions, criminal or civil,
  - If a superior court determines that a school council has not complied with the act, the court shall - unless special circumstances exist – assess in favor of the complaining party reasonable attorney's fees and other litigation costs,
  - Any action taken in violation of the open meetings act is not binding, and
  - Agency which provides access to information in good faith shall not be liable.

The complete Open Meeting Law can be found in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 through 50-14-6.



## OPEN RECORDS ACT

**School councils are subject to the Open Records Act, O.C.G.A. 50-18-70 through 50-18-76. The following information from the website of the Office of the Attorney General of Georgia may be helpful in understanding the statute. Please note that school councils should not have to revert to this law to obtain information. Georgia law requires that the local board and central office provide to the school council any requested information not made confidential in law.**

### **What is a public record that is covered under the Open Records Act?**

Under the Act, a "public record" includes all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, computer based or generated information, or similar material prepared and maintained or received in the course of the operation of a public office or agency. A "public record" also can include items received or maintained by a private person or entity on behalf of a public office or agency where the records are received or maintained by a private person, firm, corporation or other private entity in the performance of a service or function for or on behalf of a public agency. It does not include any computer program or computer software used or maintained in the course of operation of a public office or agency. O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70(a). O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72(e)(2).

### **Can I ask that reports or other documents be created or put in a particular format for me?**

No, a public officer or agency is not required to prepare reports, summaries, or compilations not in existence at the time of the request. However, if a request is merely asking for a printout of information contained in an electronic record and there is no major programming required for the production of that information, then that information is subject to being produced in response to an Open Records request. O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70(d); 1989 Op. Att'y Gen. 89-32.

### **How much can I be charged for a record obtained through the Open Records Act?**

A public agency must use the most economical means available for providing copies of a public record. This means that records maintained by computer shall be made available where practicable by electronic means, including Internet access (subject to reasonable security restrictions preventing access to nonrequested or nonavailable records.) A record's custodian can collect a reasonable fee for the search, retrieval and other direct administrative costs for complying with an Open Records request. The hourly charge for these costs cannot exceed the salary of the lowest paid full-time employee who, in the discretion of the custodian, has the necessary skill and training to perform the request. No charge can be made for the first 15 minutes of these actions. When copies are provided, an agency may charge a uniform copying charge not to exceed 25 cents a page. O.C.G.A. § 50-18-71.

### **How can the Attorney General's Office help in an Open Records or Open Meetings dispute?**

In 1997, the Attorney General pressed for legislation to amend Georgia's Open Meetings and Open Records acts to give the Department of Law the ability to help citizens and government agencies resolve their disputes without resorting to litigation. After the legislation was passed, the attorney general's office moved to create an informal mediation program to help Georgia's citizens with questions or concerns about local government's decisions to close meetings to the public or governmental responses to Open Records requests. Upon receiving a complaint from a Georgia



citizen, attorneys at the Department of Law work to ensure that local governments provide all the access to meetings and records that Georgia citizens are entitled to under the law. If local governments fail to fulfill their obligations under the Open Meetings and Open Records acts, the attorney general's office can initiate legal action to force the local government to obey Georgia's sunshine laws.





## SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING

### Willow Creek Middle School Council October 1, 2007

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Presentation to School Council  
Math Textbook Adoption Sara Jane Reilly
6. Report of the Principal  
Impact of changes to funding for FY2007-2008  
New School Safety Plan  
Ideas for mentor programs and opportunities with existing businesses
7. Old business  
Parent Participation Surveys- results
8. New Business  
Organizing parent survey results  
Additional math resources beyond textbooks
9. Adjournment

Willow Creek Middle School Council  
4950 Willow Place  
Pelham, Georgia  
912-856-2400, 912-856-2401  
[lcarey@willow.k12.ga.us](mailto:lcarey@willow.k12.ga.us)  
[www.willowmiddle.k12.ga.us](http://www.willowmiddle.k12.ga.us)

Leona Carey, Principal



## Getting to Know Your School

A school tour is a great way to familiarize school council members with their school. The tour should be given from the perspective of academics and school climate rather than “This is the cafeteria, this is the media center.” The school council members should also receive some basic information about the school at the beginning of their term, such as:

### School Information

- Address
- Phone number
- FAX number
- Web address

### Faculty and Staff

- Names
- Job assignments
- Length of time at the school
- Length of time of certification, if applicable

### School Calendar

### School Map

### Student Handbook

### Faculty Handbook

Copies of School Newsletters for those new to the school

## School Tour

### Locations

- Academic Departments
- Grade Level Clusters
- Labs
- Gymnasium
- Cafeteria
- Media Center
  - Number of books
  - How the media center is used
  - Equipment availability
  - Expenditures per pupil
- Theater or Auditorium

### Technology

- Computers in classrooms
- Labs and Internet connection

### School Grounds

- Portable Classrooms
  - Number
  - Use
  - Location
- Outlying buildings or structures
- Playgrounds
- Athletic Fields

### Maintenance Information

- Cleaning schedule
- Cleaning crew or contractor

### Safety Procedures/Safe School Plan



## School Data

The focus of the school council is student achievement and school improvement. All recommendations should be researched and data-driven. Following is a list of data that school council members should be provided to perform their duties. **This data would be received over the course of their term as particular topics are addressed.**

### Students

- Total enrollment/FTE
- Racial/ethnic makeup
- Gender makeup
- Free and reduced price lunch eligibility (socio-economic status)
- Limited English Proficient students (number/percentage)
- Students with disabilities (number/percentage)
- Attendance rate
- Attendance Policy
- Discipline Code
- Grading Policy
- Homework Policy
- Makeup Work Policy
- Mobility rate

### Faculty and Staff

- Racial/ethnic/gender makeup
- Types of degrees
- Number of years of service
- Duties and responsibilities
- Special assignments
- Attendance
- Procedures for Acquiring Substitutes
- Staff Development Initiatives
- Mentoring Programs
- Turn-over rate

### School Improvement Plan

#### School Test Results

- School and district AYP report
- Websites for test score information
  - [www.GeorgiaEducation.org](http://www.GeorgiaEducation.org)
  - [www.gaosa.org](http://www.gaosa.org)

#### School Budget

- Site budget and expenditures
- State funds allocated to the system
- Federal funds and requirements for expenditure
- Other funds such as "Coke or picture money"

#### Class size

- Average class size requirements  
([http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/\\_documents/doe/legalservices/160-5-1-.08.pdf](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-5-1-.08.pdf))
- Class size counts by grade and program

#### Applicable Local Board Policies

#### School Master Schedule

#### Textbooks



#### Special Programs

- Before school
- After school
- Extracurricular programs
- Summer school

#### Academic Programs

- By subject/department
- Limited English Proficient
- Students with disabilities
  - Number of students in each classification
  - Gender and race of students
- Gifted
  - Eligibility requirements
  - Number of students
  - Gender and race of students
- Early intervention program
- Advance Placement classes
  - How many offered
  - How many students take the exams and scores
  - Gender and race of students
- Student Support Team services
- Technology

#### Number of Graduates by diploma/endorsement

- College Preparatory
- Vocational
- Special Education
- Certificate of Attendance
- School Graduation Rate

#### Community Resources

- Agencies
- Public library
- Business partners
- Civic groups
- Education agencies

#### Parent Involvement

- Parent Education Programs
- Parent Teacher Organization
- Parent Volunteer Programs
- Curriculum Guides

#### Special Accomplishments/Awards/Recognitions

#### **School councils should be introduced to:**

- Faculty and staff at faculty meeting
- Parents at parent meeting/Open house
- General school population via article in school newsletter and website



## The School Council's Role in the Principal Selection Process

***The role of the school council in the principal selection process shall be determined in policy written by the local board of education.  
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86(t)***

### **BACKGROUND**

In establishing school councils in 2000, the General Assembly recognized the need to involve parents and the community in the management and operation of local schools. One such mandated area of involvement was the selection of the school principal, recognizing that studies of effective schools find that it is the leadership of the school that makes a critical difference in student achievement. In a 2004 survey by GSCI of school councils in Georgia, 72% of the parents, 70% of the teachers and 61% of the business members said school councils can be effective in the principal selection process. Clearly this remains an area in which the school stakeholders are eager for input.

The original law, requiring school councils to make recommendations ***“in the case of a vacancy in the position of school principal, the recommendation of a school principal from a list of qualified applicants submitted by the local board of education and the local school superintendent to the council,”*** did not clearly define the school council's role in the principal selection process. This vagueness generated the majority of questions received by the Georgia School Council Institute in the first three years of school council operations. The 2004 amendments deleted the vague wording and, instead of trying to legislate the process, now requires local boards of education to adopt written policies that clearly define the role of the school council in the principal selection process.

Currently, very few written policies actually define the role of the school council in the principal selection process. Most of the policies simply delegate the matter to the superintendent or offer a general statement. Of those that do exist and based on anecdotal evidence, it appears that the involvement of school councils falls into one of three scenarios, each of which includes some level of participation by the school council, although the information provided to them varies widely:

1. Pre-screening and interviews are conducted by the Superintendent and staff, and the names of the finalists are sent to the school board. The school board then provides a list of names to the school council for its recommendation. At this stage, the amount of information provided to the school council varies widely. Some school councils receive only the name of the selected candidate; some receive the names of all acceptable candidates; and some receive additional information about the candidates, such as the resumes of the candidates. The school council's recommendation goes to the Superintendent and the school board for their final consideration.
2. Pre-screening is done by the central office to ensure the applicants meet the minimum qualifications. An interview committee is convened which includes some school council members. The interview committee is given interview questions to ask. The interview committee recommends finalists to the Superintendent. The Superintendent interviews the finalists and sends the recommended candidate(s) to the school board for its approval.
3. Pre-screening is done at the central office to ensure the applicants meet the minimum qualifications. The school council and one or two central office personnel together review the applications, select the candidates to interview, develop the questions to ask, and conduct the interviews. The council sends the Superintendent a list of finalists to be interviewed. The Superintendent selects the candidate and makes the final recommendation to the school board. The principal may report back to the council if the council's recommended candidate is not the



candidate recommended to the board. The board may or may not report back to the council if its final selection is not the candidate recommended by the council.

## **LOCAL BOARD POLICIES**

The local board of education sets policy for the school system. By law, school councils have a role to play in the adoption of such policies. School councils should play an essential role in the policy adopted by local boards defining the role school councils are to play in the principal selection process. As elected bodies, school boards must receive input from the public when developing such policies. Requiring written policies ensures that this process will occur. No longer should the school council's role in the principal selection process be made up as it occurs. School council members must speak up before the local board to ensure that there is a meaningful role for them to play in the principal selection process.

School systems in Georgia vary in size from one school with less than 300 students to school systems with over 150,000 students. Clearly there is no single policy that will be appropriate for each system. Some elements, however, should be common in all policies.

### **Statement of Expectations**

Local boards should clearly state their expectation that school councils will be involved in this process in a meaningful way. A collaborative effort would involve the school council in every step of the process. This level of involvement strengthens the community and provides a supportive climate for the new principal. Narrowly limiting the role the school council plays or creating a meaningless participation model leaves the community uninvolved or with negative feelings about the process and possibly about the new principal.

### **Training school council members to participate**

School council members need to be trained to effectively participate in the principal selection process. Training should be done long before principal candidates are even selected for consideration. Training needs to include information about the minimum qualifications for the position, interview legalities, interview techniques, and how to assess candidates. All school councils should receive this training as a standard part of the annual school council training, which will begin to build the council's capacity to be effective participants in the principal selection process should it occur.

### **Selecting candidates to interview**

Involving the school council at this step allows the community a strong voice in the type of person who will ultimately be selected for the position. The school council and central office administrators can work together to select the interview candidates. Although job applications and resumes are not confidential documents, school council members can be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement if the school system so desires. *Properly trained councils will respect the process.* At a minimum participation level, the school council should be asked to provide criteria on which to select a candidate. The criteria would be developed with input from teachers, staff, and parents. Administrators selecting candidates to interview should consider the criteria when selecting candidates.

### **Interviewing process**

The policy adopted by the local board should clearly address the following questions:

Will the school council and administrators interview candidates separately or together?

If an interview committee is used will the entire school council be included or will the council elect representatives to serve on it?

Who writes the interview questions? Must all questions be pre-approved? If so, are follow-up questions allowed?

What questions may not be asked in an interview?



### **Making a candidate recommendation**

The policy adopted by the local board should clearly address the following questions:

In what form should the recommendation be?

Is it a ranking sheet from the interview process without discussion?

Should there be a ranking sheet and separate discussion notes?

Is the recommendation to be one candidate, a minimum number of candidates, or a minimum and maximum range?

If a school council recommendation is done separately from the administration, what is the obligation of the Superintendent to the school council if the Superintendent chooses a different candidate?

Is there an obligation to always let the school council evaluate the candidate selected by the Superintendent if it is a person not previously seen by them?

### **CONCLUSION**

Without a well thought out policy in place community members often feel they have been placed on the sidelines, have been left-out or are uncertain why or how they are being asked to participate. A well thought out policy is key to ensuring all involved are able to understand, appreciate and productively contribute to the process. At a minimum, it is important that there be open, honest, two-way communication so that the community does not feel their time was wasted and their opinion disregarded. **Agreement is not necessary, but respect for each other's role is.**



## Guidelines For Interviewing Principals

<b>QUESTIONS BEFORE HIRING</b>	<b>LAWFUL</b>	<b>UNLAWFUL</b>
<b>Name</b>	Name	Any inquiry that would indicate race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, age or ancestry`
<b>Address</b>	Inquiry into place and length of current address	Inquiry into foreign address that would indicate national origin
<b>Age</b>	Any inquiry limited to establishing that applicant meets any minimum age requirements which may be established by law	(a) Requiring birth certificates or baptismal record before hiring (b) Any other inquiry which may reveal whether applicant is at least 40 and less than 70 years of age
<b>Birthplace or National Origin</b>		(a) Any inquiry into place of birth (b) Any inquiry into place of birth of parents, grandparents or spouse (c) Any other inquiry into national origin
<b>Race or Color</b>		Any inquiry that would indicate race or color
<b>Sex</b>		(a) Any inquiry that would indicate sex (b) Any inquiry made of members of one sex but not the other
<b>Religion or Creed</b>		(a) Any inquiry that would indicate or identify religious denomination or custom (b) Applicant may not be told any religious identity or preference of the employer (c) Request pastor's recommendation or reference
<b>Disability</b>	Inquiries necessary to determine applicant's ability to substantially perform specific jobs without significant hazard	Any other inquiry that would reveal disability
<b>Citizenship</b>	Can require proof of citizenship or visa status after offering the position	(a) Asking if native-born or naturalized (b) Requiring proof of citizenship before hiring (c) Asking whether parents or spouse are native-born or naturalized
<b>Photographs</b>	May require for identification purposes	Cannot require photographs before hiring
<b>Arrests and Convictions</b>	Inquiry into convictions for specific crimes related to qualification of the job applied for	Any inquiry that would reveal arrests without convictions





<b>QUESTIONS BEFORE HIRING</b>	<b>LAWFUL</b>	<b>UNLAWFUL</b>
<b>Education</b>	(a) Inquiry into nature and extent of academic, professional or vocational training (b) Inquiry into language skills, such as reading and writing of foreign languages	(a) Any inquiry that would reveal the nationality or religious affiliation of a school (b) Any inquiry as to what native tongue is or how foreign language ability was acquired
<b>Relatives</b>		Any inquiry about a relative that would be unlawful if made about the applicant
<b>Organizations</b>	Inquiry into organization memberships and offices held, excluding any organizations the name or character of which indicates the race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age or ancestry of its members	Inquiry into all clubs and organization where memberships is held
<b>Military Service</b>	(a) Inquiry into service in U.S. Armed Forces when such service is a qualification for the job (b) Can require military discharge certificate after being hired	(a) Inquiry into military service in armed service of any country but U.S. (b) Request military service records (c) Inquiry into type of discharge
<b>Work Schedule</b>	Inquiry into willingness to work required work schedule	Any inquiry into willingness to work any particular religious holiday
<b>Other</b>	Any question required to reveal qualifications for the job applied for	Any non-job related inquiry that may reveal information permitting unlawful discrimination
<b>References</b>	General personal and work references not relating to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age or ancestry	Request references specifically from clergy or any other persons who might reflect race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age or ancestry of applicant



## Principal Interview Questions

1. Have you served as a principal before? If, so what grade level schools (elementary, middle, high)? How many years?
2. What was the test performance of the students in your schools? State tests, National test?
3. Describe your average daily routine in percents by the following: discipline, buses, lunchroom, classroom visits, parent conferences, staff meetings, building and grounds, paperwork/reports, meetings outside of school.
4. What role do parents play in your school? Give specific examples.
5. What is the function of the PTA/PTO in your school?
6. What is the function of the School Council in your school?
7. How do you recruit teachers?
8. How do you keep parents informed?
9. Describe your style of leadership and give examples.
10. How would you handle a situation where a parent wants her child removed from a particular teacher's classroom; however, the teacher wants the child to stay?
11. Name five words that best describe you as an administrator.
12. Give three reasons why you should be selected as the principal of our school.
13. What are your immediate or short-term goals for our school? What are your five-year goals?
14. Who do you involve in decision making issues?
15. How do you evaluate student work and how do you know whether that work meets standard?
16. How do you evaluate teachers and other staff? What are your criteria?
17. Explain your view of work ethics.
18. How do you monitor staff as their compliance with the Georgia Teacher Code of Ethics?
19. What role would the business community serve in a school under your supervision?
20. Describe your involvement in community and civic activities.
21. Describe the best teacher you know. Describe the best parent you know. Describe the best student you know.
22. How do you measure the success of a school?
23. What are the steps you follow in dealing with a child that is not demonstrating success? Who do you involve and when?
24. Describe your most successful experience as a principal.
25. Describe your worst experience as a principal.



## Are School Councils Working?

Policymakers often ask if school councils are working. The short answer is “Yes.” They are not, however, all working at the same level or in the same way. The leadership of the principal, the training and experience of the members, and the goals of the group determine how the school council does its work. When one or more members want to work at a different level than the others, it can lead to frustration and the perception that this is not working. This is part of the learning process of any group. It is also part of the learning curve for the development of any system. Most problems in the working of the school council can be traced to attitude and communication. Those are both issues that must be dealt with locally. Legislation can create a framework for community involvement, but attitudes can not be legislated.

The Ontario School Council Support Centre’s research has found there are five stages of development of school councils. All the stages are helpful, important contributions to the success of the school. Following are the stages and their characteristics:

### Stage One – Traditional Role

- This stage is characterized by the traditional kinds of involvement – fundraising, volunteering, and attending social events.
- There is a limited role for advice or involvement in the development of the improvement plan.
- The limitation may be the result of parents simply being more comfortable in those roles.
- It may also be the result of the professional educators’ routinely taking care of improvement.

### Stage Two – Developing Advisory Capabilities

- This stage is characterized by people working to become more knowledgeable and capable of providing informed advice to the principal.
- This is a learning stage for both parents and educators.
- This stage can be filled with miscommunication and misunderstandings as people try to become comfortable discussing matters that used to be the exclusive domain of educators.
- Members work to clarify their role.
- This stage requires leadership, patience, and a willingness on everyone’s part to allow for mistakes.
- Ontario reports that most school councils spent one to two years in this stage. Many remained in this stage after six years (the length of the study).

### Stage Three – Advisory Role

- The school council is involved in the school improvement plan.
- The principal is comfortable sharing responsibility for the plan to gain a greater level of commitment to the plan.
- The council focuses on doing a few things very well.
- The challenge is how to have more impact on student learning.
- Parents are comfortable and confident in providing informed advice to the principal.
- The principal is comfortable receiving recommendations and responding appropriately to the school council.

### Stage Four – Developing Partnership Capabilities

- Members believe they need a stronger partnership among stakeholders in the interests of student learning.
- The school council begins to explore methods of increasing levels of parental involvement in education.
- Improved student learning is the clearly understood goal of the school council.
- It is understood that there are important ways that parents can impact student learning beyond their traditional roles and beyond providing informed advice.



### Stage Five – Advanced Partnerships

- The school council is working together in a partnership dedicated to improved student learning.
- Members have a high degree of trust and confidence in each other.
- There is a high level of understanding of the kinds of parental and community involvement that leads to increased student learning.
- The key challenge is maintaining a steady flow of volunteers. Leadership roles must be shared so that programs are not dependent on one person.
- There is a focus and a clear sense of direction for the school council.
- Individuals and teams work together to lead programs dedicated to improved parenting.
- There is good two-way communication between home and school.
- There are quality volunteering programs with training and meaningful activities for volunteers to conduct.
- Parents have several opportunities to attend social events at the school.
- Homework assignments are managed cooperatively between home and school. Parents understand their role in supporting the completion of homework.
- Advice to the principal is informed and focused.



## Assessing the School Council's Effectiveness

It is important for all organizations to periodically discuss and evaluate their activities and performance. School councils are no exception. A sample self-assessment questionnaire is provided. Research in Chicago and several Canadian provinces has provided some common characteristics of effective school councils which are as follows:

- They focus on student learning and the best interests of all students.
- They are actively involved in setting school priorities for improving student achievement.
- They promote meaningful parental and community involvement.
- They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- They keep well informed about school and board policies and procedures.
- They have clear and consistent processes for decision-making.
- They communicate with the community about their activities and actively seek the views of the community.
- They establish priorities and goals and stick to them.

### Checklist of School Council Effectiveness

#### **ARE YOU ...**

##### **Participating in planning by providing advice on:**

- school's education plan (e.g. yearly goals)
- program priorities (e.g. curriculum emphasis, academic options)
- budget allocations (e.g. resources that support education plan)
- school policies
- training needs of parents and school council members
- school board policies

##### **Facilitating communication:**

- involving the school community in important decisions (e.g. through forums, newsletters, surveys, community bulletin boards, etc.)
- ensuring parents and teachers are working in partnership to enhance student learning (e.g. newsletters, grade level meetings, workshops, etc.)
- sharing information and networking with other school councils in your district

##### **Evaluating:**

- school's success in meeting its education plan (i.e. achievement targets — were they supported? met? realistic? etc.)
- the results of special projects (e.g. literacy program, homework program, etc.)
- school council



## Self Assessment Questionnaire

Assess your school council's effectiveness. Complete honestly with constructive comments and return to Chair of school council.

Are council meetings effective?

Rarely     Sometimes     Mostly     Always

How could council meetings be improved?

Are we focused on student achievement?

Not at all     Somewhat     Mostly     Consistently

Have we prioritized and set goals for ourselves?

Yes     No     Not sure

Are you pleased with the school council's performance?

Very much so     Mostly     Somewhat     Not at all

What is going well?

What do we need to do differently?

What do we need to be able to improve our performance?

You do not need to sign this sheet, but please check the appropriate space.

Parent     Teacher/Principal     Business     Community     Staff



## Effective Meetings

If meetings are not time well-spent, it is unlikely that any substantive work will be done. The chair's role in maximizing the effectiveness of meetings is crucial.

- Start and end meetings on time.
- Keep to the agenda and the timelines. If new business items are raised that cannot be fully discussed due to time constraints, record them and carry them forward as agenda items at a future meeting.
- Maintain order and keep the focus on the school council's priorities.
- Ensure that minutes of each meeting are kept.
- Encourage everyone to participate. Do not let one or two people dominate discussions.
- Try to remain neutral and provide alternative ways to solve problems.
- Encourage decision making through consensus.
- At the end of each meeting, summarize and review actions and decisions.
- Remind members of time, date, and location of next meeting and any new items of business to be included in that meeting's agenda.
- Occasionally ask members to assess the effectiveness of a meeting. Use the information to improve future school council meetings. A sample meeting evaluation form is provided.

### **A meeting has been effective when participants feel:**

- The meeting had a purpose.
- They have a sense of accomplishment.
- They contributed to the discussion.
- They are a valued part of the group.
- Creative ideas, alternatives, or solutions were generated.
- They were able to share differing points of view.
- They are committed to the decisions made and actions taken.
- They are willing to work together again.



## Meeting Evaluation Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please take time to complete this survey. Be honest in your responses. This is your opportunity to improve future meetings.

### Evaluation Scale

1- Not at all                      2                      3                      4                      5- Very much so

(Circle one)

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Was the purpose of this meeting clear to you?                     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. Did the atmosphere allow for free discussion?                     | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. Was there enough time for discussion?                             | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. Are you clear on what, if any, decision(s) was reached?           | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. Are you clear on the next steps being taken?                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. Are you clear about who is responsible for taking the next steps? | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. Do you think your time was well-spent?                            | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8. Any comments for the Chair on how the meeting was conducted?      |           |

9. Do you have suggestions for improving future meetings?

You do not need to sign this sheet, but please check the appropriate space.

Parent    
  Teacher/Principal    
  Business    
  Community    
  Staff



# School Council Compliance Checklist

To be submitted with the Annual Report of the school council to the Local Board of Education.

## **Bylaws (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (h))**

Bylaws in accordance with the 2007 school council law have been adopted. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

## **Membership (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d))**

At least 2 Teacher members \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No Terms End \_\_\_\_\_

At least 2 Parent members \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No Terms End \_\_\_\_\_

2 Business members\* \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No Terms End \_\_\_\_\_

Other members as specified within bylaws \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ None added to bylaws.

Parents are majority members \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**\*For terms beginning after July 1, 2007, these 2 business persons must also be parents.**

## **Elections (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d))**

Elections were held on \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE NUMBER AND POSITION

\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_

## **Officers (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86(j))**

Chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary were elected on \_\_\_\_\_ for a term of \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Meetings (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f))**

Number of meetings held: \_\_\_ (At least four meetings per year are required.)

## **Training (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (b))**

All school council members have attended training on the organizational, legal, and procedural issues regarding school councils:

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Additional annual training was offered on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ school council members attended.

\_\_\_ No additional annual training was offered.

## **Improvement Plan (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86(r)(4))**

The school council received, reviewed, and approved the school improvement plan on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ The school council has not approved the school improvement plan; it was received on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ The school council has not received the school improvement plan.

## **Financial Data and Class Size Information (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86(p))**

The school council received and reviewed school site budget and expenditure information on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ The school council has not received school site budget and expenditure information.

The school council received and reviewed class sizes by grade on \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ The school council has not received class size information.

## **Confirmation**

We confirm the above information is correct.

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

Vice Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE