

# **SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL DECISIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

A School Community Council (SCC) is established in each school to provide a cooperative means of improving the educational programs and conditions within that school. Its membership should represent school employees and parents or guardians of students. Ideas for discussion topics may be generated by any individual or group in the school community.

## ***Decisions and Responsibilities***

Decisions and responsibilities allocated to the SCC by Utah state statute include the following:

- Develop a School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- Develop the School LAND Trust Plan.
- Assist in the development and implementation of a school professional development plan.
- Advise and make recommendations to school and school district administrators and the local school board regarding the school and its programs, school district programs, and other issues relating to the community environment for students.
- Develop a reading achievement plan. (Note: State law requires only that elementary schools develop such a plan. The Salt Lake City School District requires that all School Improvement Plans contain a literacy component.)

To carry out these responsibilities, members of an SCC must also plan to accomplish the following tasks (some may be delegated with results approved by the council):

- Identify the school's most critical academic needs and recommend courses of action to meet those needs.
- Review the school budgets, federal and state accountability data, and other information provided by the principal, to develop a School Improvement Plan designed to produce a measurable increase in student achievement.
- Describe how the school intends to enhance or improve academic achievement. Include all financial resources available to the school: School LAND Trust Program monies (received under section 53A-16-101.5 of the Utah Code), federal, state, local, and private grants.
- Develop a list of programs, practices, materials, or equipment the school will need to implement its improvement plan.
- See that local reporting requirements for performance and accountability are reflected in the School Improvement Plan.

School Improvement Plans must:

- focus on the school's most critical academic needs;
- relate to relevant "essentials of a learning community" as described in the district's Student Achievement Plan;
- maintain student privacy, both in the plan itself and in the process of its development; and
- be presented to and approved annually by the school board.

School Improvement Plans may:

- include a variety of actions to improve academic achievement;
- address aspects of community environment for students other than academic achievement; and
- involve a multiyear program or effort.

In the Salt Lake City School District SCCs have the following additional responsibilities:

- Provide ongoing support for the plan and monitor its implementation.
- Review the school's Emergency Preparedness Plan annually. (See Board Policy G-2, Emergency Preparedness.)
- While state law does not require the SCC to develop and implement a child access routing plan, the Salt Lake City School District recommends the SCC be involved in the development of the plan.
- Oversee the evaluation and implementation of the district wellness policy at the school site. (See Board Policy G-3, Wellness.)
- Approve student overnight trips pursuant to board policy. (See Board Policy I-19 AP, Overnight/Extended Trips.)
- Approve fundraising activities involving students, in advance, as described in board policy I-17, Student Fundraising Activities.
- Work collaboratively on school discipline, attendance, and citizenship policies including site-based plans to deal with student harassment and bullying. (See the following board policies and associated procedures): S-3 Student Discipline; S-4, Student Attendance and Exemption from School; and G-19, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment for Students and Employees.)
- Determine and facilitate discussion of site-based uniform or dress codes pursuant to board policy and state law. (See Board Policy S-5, Dress and Grooming.)
- Evaluate the school and community efforts in shared governance after receiving SCC survey results and making recommendations to school and/or district administration.
- Recommend a school calendar from among the choices approved by the district's calendar committee.
- Recommend calendar variances within parameters set by the board.
- Assist with grant applications and business partnerships if the council or its members choose to do so.

### ***Composition and Selection of Member***

Each council consists of school employee members and parent or guardian members. (See Utah Code §53A-1a-108.)

Each SCC for a high school should have at least six parent or guardian members and four school employee members, including the principal; and each SCC for a school other than a high school should have at least four parent or guardian members and two employee members, including the principal.

A school community council may determine the size of the school community council by a majority vote of a quorum of the school community council provided that:

- the membership includes two or more parent or guardian members than the number of school employee members; and
- there are at least two school employee members on the school community council.

The number of parent or guardian members of a school community council who are not educators employed by the school district shall exceed the number of parent or guardian members who are educators employed by the school district.

Any member elected or appointed to a School Community Council serves a two-year term. The Salt Lake City School District prefers that the terms of all members begin on July 1 to facilitate

consistent communication and training. State law allows flexibility in the beginning date of council members' terms. The principal should notify the school leadership support team if the council agrees on an alternative date.

The ballot and voting process is required only in the event of a school community council contested race. In contested races, elections must follow procedures required by law:

- Each school shall establish a timeline for the election of parent or legal guardian members of a school community council.
- The election shall be held near the beginning of the school year or held in the spring and completed before the last week of school.
- The timing of the election must remain the same for at least four years.
- Notice must be given at least 10 days in advance of elections.
- The principal or principal's designee must oversee the elections.
- Elections must be by secret ballot deposited in a secure ballot box.
- Elections may be conducted by electronic ballot.
- Ballots and the results of each election shall be maintained for three years.
- If there is not a contested race, the school need not hold an election.
- There are no term limits for parents/guardians, but they must have a child attending the school during each two-year term.
- Terms are to be staggered so that approximately half of the council is up for election each year.
- The School Community Council may determine the size of the council by a majority vote of a quorum.

Each school employee member, except the principal, must be elected by a majority vote of the school employees in a publicized election. The principal serves as an ex officio member with full voting privileges.

Any qualified parent or guardian may file or declare as a candidate for election to an SCC. A parent or guardian is considered "qualified" for membership on an SCC, if, at any time during his or her term of office, he or she has a student attending, or will have a student enrolled at the school.

Each parent or guardian member must be selected by the vote of a majority of parents or guardians of students in the school who participate in a publicized election. Results of the election must be made available to members of the public upon request and will be maintained for three years.

If, after an election, a parent or guardian position on the SCC remains unfilled, the other parent or guardian members of the council should appoint a qualified parent or guardian to fill the position. If, after an election, a school employee position on the SCC remains unfilled, the other school employee members of the council should appoint a qualified employee to fill the position. Following the election, if there are more parent members who are educators in the district than parents who are not educators in the district elected to the council, the parents on the council shall appoint additional parent members until the number of parent members who are not educators exceeds the number of parent educators in the district. Additionally, council membership must include two or more parents or guardians than the number of school employees. The chair of the SCC must, through the superintendent's office, notify the local school board of each appointment made.

Councils shall have a chair and vice-chair, the chair must be a parent and the vice-chair may be a parent or employee member, excluding the principal.

Following the election, principals shall enter and electronically sign on the School LAND Trust website a Principal's Assurance Form that assures the membership of the council conforms to the law; the members were elected according to the requirements in law and board rule; and when appointments need to be made, parent or employee members on the council fill the vacant positions according to the law. Legislative audits may be conducted to review election procedures. School LAND Trust funding may be reduced or eliminated if a legislative audit finds improper elections or membership nonconformity to the law.

## ***Operating Procedures***

The council meets monthly, or more often if business dictates. Meetings are conducted using informal parliamentary procedures. Meeting agendas are set by the SCC chair in consultation with the SIC chair and the principal or designee. An open agenda is used so that individual members of the council may introduce items of business or points of view to be considered. Council members shall not be discouraged or prohibited from discussing any issue or concern not prohibited by law. Before a decisions are made, a quorum of one-half of the membership must be present.

Minutes of the council proceedings must be distributed to members of the council within ten (10) days of each meeting, and approved by vote of the council members at a subsequent meeting. Once minutes have been approved by vote of the members, they become the official record of the proceedings. Official minutes must be posted on the school website as soon as possible after they have been approved.

Salt Lake City School District recommends that audio recordings of council meetings be made and kept at the school for one year. Posting of audio recordings on the school's website is optional.

One week prior to each council meeting, the SCC Chair, assisted by the school principal, must post the following on the school website and provide this information through at least one other direct delivery method:

- notice of the upcoming meeting, including the date, time, and place;
- agenda for the meeting; and
- official minutes (approved by the committee via email or by some other agreed-upon procedure) or unofficial minutes of the previous meeting (labeled "draft," or "awaiting formal approval").

Annually, on or before October 20, state law requires the following to be completed:

- the council must be in place, including elections and subsequent appointments
- The Membership Form, Principal Assurance Form and Final Report of the prior year's School LAND Trust plan implementation must be submitted on the LAND Trust website
- Fall notification requirements that include:
  - o Names and contact information (direct email, phone or both) for each member of the council
  - o Proposed school community council meeting schedule for the year
  - o A summary of the implementation of the School LAND Trust Program Plan completed in the prior school year. This includes accomplishments and how the money was spent.

These reports may be communicated in the following ways:

- post on the school website; and

- using one or a combination of the following methods of delivery to ensure that all parents or guardians receive the information:

- send to each student's household by mail, voicemail, or e-mail; and/or
- give to parents and guardians, in written form, during annual registration or with report cards.

- School LAND Trust funds are not to be used to provide parent notifications

Principals shall ensure that school websites fully communicate the opportunities provided to parents to serve on the school community council and how parents can directly influence the expenditure of the School LAND Trust Program funds.

The council may determine additional operating procedures through mutual agreement.

The chair and/or chair elect (a parent or guardian) and vice-chair (a parent or a school employee, excluding the principal) are elected by the council in the spring to serve beginning July 1, though state law allows some flexibility in the beginning date of council and leadership terms, as described above under Composition and Selection of Members.

Councils may determine procedures for replacing SCC members should they fail to meet attendance requirements as set by the council.

An SCC may create subcommittees or task forces to advise or make recommendations to the council or to develop all or part of a plan. Individuals who are not council members, including parents, school employees, or other community members, may serve on a subcommittee or task force. Any plan or part of a plan developed by a subcommittee or task force is subject to the approval of the SCC.

A group of parents who feel that they are not adequately represented on the SCC may petition the council for an additional representative position. The SCC can accept or reject the petition. Petitioners may appeal the SCC decision to the District's Shared Governance Committee.

## ***Decision-making***

Under shared governance, groups strive for consensus.

Consensus is a collective opinion arrived at by a group whose members have listened carefully, communicated openly, been able to state their opposition to other members' views, and sought and considered alternatives in a constructive problem-solving manner. All members, because they have had the opportunity to influence the decision, should understand and support it.

Consensus evolves from open discussions, until participants feel satisfied with their decision. Reaching consensus should be the goal in all councils and committees of the district.

Consensus does not mean one hundred percent agreement. Seldom will everyone be wholly satisfied with any decision. Consensus does require that all participants be able to accept and support a decision.

Consensus takes time, and decisions should not be rushed. When the process is effectively implemented, it provides the opportunity for compromise and precludes the unilateral, capricious, or arbitrary exercise of power.

When it is clear a decision cannot be reached through consensus, the law requires a simple majority vote using parliamentary procedures that must be recorded.