

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 teacher
- ⌚ 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.