

Kentucky PTA
Parent SBDM Handbook
Sixth Edition



School-Based Decision Making
2008

Where to Call for Help and Information

Kentucky PTA 502-226-6607

www.kypta.org

Kentucky Association of School Councils 859-238-2188

www.kasc.net

KASC is a membership association for councils that provides training opportunities, legal opinions, a statewide conference, and a newsletter. The standardized training that all endorsed trainers in Kentucky must complete is offered through KASC.

Kentucky Department of Education 502-564-4201

www.education.ky.gov

The Kentucky Department of Education provides written answers to written questions, Attorney General's opinions, Kentucky Board of Education Regulations, printed materials on selecting a principal, list of endorsed council trainers, sample council bylaws and policies, a newsletter for school councils, and direct technical assistance to schools and districts. Contact the department of education for answer and clarification of SBDM.

(More information and resources inside back cover)

Office of Education Accountability 502-564-2256

Hotline: 800-242-0520

<http://162.114.4.12.oea/default.htm>

Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

859-233-9849

www.prichardcommittee.org

The Prichard Committee answers questions regarding education reform and has publications for sale on SBDM, education reform updates, and a newsletter.

Your Local District Superintendent

Your Local School Board

Your local school district has policies regarding school-based decision making, and provides support for the implementation of SBDM.

View the SBDM law on teacher and parent elections in

KRS 160.345 (2) (b) 1 and 2 at

<http://162.114.4.13\krs\160-00\345.pdf>

This is the sixth edition of the *Kentucky PTA SBDM Parent Handbook*. Legislative changes to SBDM laws have occurred since the publication of previous editions. If you or any members of your PTA/PTSA or school community have any previous editions, **PLEASE THROW THEM AWAY NOW!** The current edition of this SBDM Handbook may be found at the Kentucky PTA website www.kypta.org. under Trainings/Events.

One copy of the sixth edition of the *Kentucky PTA SBDM Parent Handbook* is provided free to each PTA and PTSA in Kentucky. Additional copies may be obtained for \$3.00 (\$5.00 for non PTAs) plus \$4.00 shipping and handling per order, from Kentucky PTA, P. O. Box 654, Frankfort, KY 40602-0654; 502-226-6607.

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KENTUCKY PARENT INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (KYPIRC)
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Kentucky PTA wishes to thank the following for their information on school-based decision making that has been incorporated in this handbook:

- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Association of School Councils
- Partnership for Kentucky School Reform and
- Education Coalition member organizations

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Introduction

This handbook is written specifically for parents and PTAs. Its goal is to assist parents and the PTA or PTSA in understanding school-based decision making and how it works. The intent is to give a basic overview of school-based decision making for parents and to clarify the role, rights, and responsibilities of parents in this process. It will not answer all questions regarding SBDM, but will provide **guidance** and **resources** to help find the answers that parents and the PTA are seeking.

School-based decision making recognizes that students learn at significantly higher levels when decisions are made at the school to meet students' individual needs. This is accomplished by placing important decisions in the hands of the school principal, teachers and parents—the people who know the students best. School-based decision making further confirms that parents have a great deal to contribute to the design of this individualized learning environment.

The role of the parents in school-based decision making is extremely important. Research shows that when parents are welcomed into the school and become a part of the school's daily operation, student achievement improves. Councils must actively seek the involvement of parents and consistently try to bring them into the policy making decision process of the school. School councils will not be able to succeed without the active involvement of the parent members of the council and parent participation on council committees.

What is School-Based Decision Making? What is a School Council?

School-based decision making, by definition, is “a decentralized, shared process in which the local school becomes the place where most of the policies and plans for schooling take place.” It brings together the people who know best what all students in that school need to learn and succeed. Those people are the parents, teachers and principals.

The Washington State PTA defines school-based decision making as “the meaningful involvement of all the ‘stakeholders’ of a school in all policy decisions affecting the improvement of student learning.” Stakeholders include both the providers and the consumers, *i.e.* the professional educators and the parents of the students to be educated.

School-based decision making is a way of reorganizing school leadership and management so that those at the school site are given more of the management and decision making responsibility. It shifts decision making from the central authority of the district superintendent or school board to the local school's educational staff and parents.

A school council (usually the principal, three teachers and two parents) implements school-based decision making at the local school. Its makeup and role is determined by laws established by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1990. Modifications may be made by the General Assembly during any legislative session. It is important to use only the latest edition of this handbook. There are many ways school councils may operate, as you will see as you read this handbook.

The Law Says We Must Have an SBDM Council, but-- Why Do We Want One? What Does It Do?

There are many reasons why the PTA and parents would want to have a school-based decision making council at their school, but the single most important reason is to **IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING**.

There are many ways that school-based decision making councils improve student learning:

The decisions affecting education and educational resources are moved closest to where education takes place. Better decisions are made because the people who will be affected by those decisions will share in making them, have ownership of and commitment to them, and will be accountable for them. Better educational decisions lead to improved student learning.

- The best decisions usually come from group decision making which involves both the providers (professional educators) and the consumers (parents of the students to be educated) who are treated equally and have equal influence in the decision making process. Decisions are based on a broad range of knowledge involving different perspectives which generally results in improved student learning.
- Studies have shown that parent involvement in their children's education and in the schools greatly enhances the level of student academic performance. Getting parents involved in the educational process of the schools in meaningful ways is one of the best, easiest and most effective ways to improve student learning.
- School councils provide a method of on-going conversation between the consumers and the providers on how education can be delivered. They can identify how the providers and the consumers can support one another. Successful councils create a process where all interest groups-educators, administrators, principals, both certified and classified staff, parents, students and the community-can work as a team to enhance student learning.

School councils have the responsibility to set school policy and make decisions in the areas specified by law; to provide an environment to enhance student's achievement; and to help the school meet the goals established by Kentucky's education reform laws.

School-based decision making councils are consistent with PTA policy. The National PTA in its bylaws (Article III, b) states: The organization shall work with the schools to provide quality education for all children and youth and shall seek to participate in the decision making process establishing school policy..." All PTAs have a responsibility to participate in the decisions affecting policies, rules and regulations. With the support of parents and PTAs, school-based decision making councils have greater opportunities for success.

School-based decision making councils are consistent with the PTA Purposes and the PTA Mission (See back cover).

School-Based Decision Making Within Kentucky

School-based decision making (SBDM) is occurring in almost all of the states in the nation at some level, and several places have mandated SBDM just as in Kentucky. In every state, however, there are some differences and these differences become more specific in places such as Kentucky where SBDM is required by law.

KENTUCKY'S SBDM

In Kentucky, school-based decision making is part of our education reform. SBDM was included in the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. The law governing SBDM has been updated in several sessions of the Kentucky General Assembly.

WHO MUST HAVE SBDM COUNCILS?

All Kentucky public schools **must** have school-based decision making councils by July 1, 1996, except successful schools with state approval, districts with only one school and special schools (district operated vocational-technical, special education, preschool programs, alternative programs, or programs operated in institutions or outside of the district).

WHO SERVES ON THE COUNCILS?

Councils are composed of the principal, two parents and three teachers. The teachers elect their representatives and the parents elect their representatives (see page 6). Councils may be larger but must be proportionally larger, e.g.: six teachers, four parents and two administrators. A proportional variation can take place without approval from the Kentucky Board of Education. Other variations which are not proportional can be requested from the Kentucky Board of Education, but parent membership must not fall below one-third of the voting members.

WHICH PARENTS CAN BE ON THE COUNCIL?

All parents of students in the school are eligible to serve as a member of the school-based decision making council, except those specifically excluded by the law. The law defines parent as, "1. parent, stepparent or foster parent of a student; or 2. a person who has legal custody of a student pursuant to a court order and with whom the student resides."

The newest law states that, a parent representative on the council shall not be an employee or the relative of an employee of the school in which the parent serves. The parent members of the council shall not be employees or relatives of employees of the district central office, nor shall they be a local board member or his spouse. (Relative is defined as "father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, son-in-law, daughter-in-law.")

Parent members must have a child enrolled in the

school during their term on the council. The parent member does not have to be a member of the PTA.

Kentucky Education Reform "CAPACITIES" TO BE ACQUIRED BY ALL KENTUCKY STUDENTS

- Communication skills necessary to function in a complex and changing civilization.
- Knowledge to make economic, social and political choices.
- Understanding of governmental processes as they affect the community, the state and the nation.
- Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his/her mental and physical wellness.
- Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.
- Sufficient preparation to choose and pursue his or her life's work intelligently.
- Skills to enable him or her to compete favorably with students in other states.

THE SIX GOALS FOR SCHOOLS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

- Goal #1: Application of basic communication and math skills.
- Goal #2: Application of core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies and practical living skills.
- Goal #3: Becoming a self-sufficient individual.
- Goal #4: Becoming a responsible member of a family, work group, or community.
- Goal #5: Thinking and problem solving.
- Goal #6: Connecting and integrating new experiences and knowledge.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE COUNCIL'S PARENT MEMBERS?

The law states the election shall be conducted by the parent-teacher organization or, if none exists, the largest organization of parents formed for this purpose. That means the election for the parent members **must** be conducted by a parent organization such as the PTA. If there is none, one must be formed for this purpose. **The law does not allow booster type parent groups, such as band boosters, athletic boosters or academic boosters, to conduct the election. The law does not allow the parent members to be appointed—not by the PTA, other parent-teacher organizations, the principal, or any other person or group.**

School-Based Decision Making Within Kentucky

QUALIFICATIONS TO CONSIDER:

The following are some **suggested** qualifications to look for in potential SBDM council members;

- Is the candidate committed to improving the education of ALL children in the school?
- Will the candidate attend all council meetings and thoroughly prepare for them?
- Will the candidate participate as an equal member of the council?
- Is the candidate committed to representing ALL the parents of the school?
- Will the candidate commit to attending PTA meetings regularly to keep parents informed?
- Will the candidate commit to working with the PTA to establish methods of soliciting parent input before decisions are made by the council?
- Is the candidate someone who does not have a personal agenda or single issue reason for running?

TERM OF OFFICE

The standard term of office is one year. Some councils have longer terms. The law allows members to be re-elected to consecutive terms with no limit. Kentucky law states, "A school council, once elected, may adopt a policy setting different terms of office for parent and teacher members subsequently elected. This means each council may decide on the length of the terms of office for however many years it wishes—one, two or even more. Council members may run for council membership for a term immediately following their current term.

MINORITY MEMBERSHIP

Kentucky law requires a council to have a minority member if at least 8% of the students at the school are minority. Here are the important steps:

- The requirements apply to a school that had at least 8% minority students as of the preceding October 1 student count.
- Those schools will conduct their regular elections of three teachers and two parents, and if the principal or any of the elected members belong to a minority group, no further actions are necessary.
- If there is no minority member, the principal must notify the parents of a special election to pick a minority parent member. The principal is responsible for conducting the election of a minority parent.
- The principal must also allow the teachers at the school to pick a minority teacher member.
- If the school has no minority teachers, then the teachers may elect any teacher as an additional teacher member.

Minority is defined as "American Indian, Alaskan

Native, African-American; Hispanic, including persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American origin, Pacific Islander, or other ethnic group under-represented in the school.

FAQs Does the parent have to be a minority himself, or just be a parent of a minority child to serve on the SBDM council as the minority person?

- A. You must be a minority person (as defined on page 5 of the Kentucky PTA SBDM Handbook to be the minority parent representative on the council.

If you have a minority parent on the council does this mean one principal, two teachers, and three parent ratio?

- A. Maybe. You start by electing the 1-2-3 council (1 principal, 2 parents, 3 teachers).

*If one of those people is a minority member, you don't add any more members. If not (and the law requires minority representation at your school) you add another parent and another teacher to include minority members. See page 5 for additional details.

*If you have an alternative model, the makeup of your council could be different. Check with your council to see if you have an approved alternative model.

REMOVAL OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Laws relating to the removal of a member of a school council read in part, "The chief state school officer shall recommend by written charges to the proper school authorities having immediate jurisdiction, the removal of any superintendent of schools, principal, member of a school council, or other public school officer whom he has reason to believe is guilty of immorality, misconduct in office, incompetency, willful neglect of duty, or nonfeasance. In the case of a member of a school council, the written charges shall be provided to the local Board of Education... A member of a school council may be removed from the council for cause after an opportunity for hearing before the local board, by a vote of four-fifths (4/5) of the membership of a board of education after the recommendation of the chief state school officer... Written notices setting out the charges for removal shall be spread on the minutes of the board and given to the member of the school council." Now, all school council members, including parents have the same removal standards applied to them as have been applied in the past to school board members, superintendents, principals, and teachers.

No charges or proceedings may be brought against a council member unless the Kentucky Commissioner of Education says they are valid.

SBDM Parent Election Procedure

WHO VOTES FOR THE PARENT MEMBER?

Kentucky law states that parents may vote in SBDM parent elections if they have a student pre-registered to attend school during the term of office. This is a significant change from the previous law (parents with students enrolled in the school). That means that those parents who vote and are eligible to run are those who will have a student attending the school during the time that those being elected will serve.

PTA recommends that elections for parent council members be held in the early Spring, because it provides more time for council members to receive training and become prepared for the beginning of their term.

Those parents who are eligible to vote and run are:

- Parents of current students who will be continuing at the same school in the next school year.
- Parents of new students who are pre-registered to attend the school in the next school year, such as a student attending school for the first time.

Those parents who may not vote are:

- Parents of students who will be attending another school in the next school year. They will vote at the new school.
- Parents of students who are graduating.

Preschools

It is the opinion of the Kentucky PTA and the Kentucky Department of Education that parents of preschoolers in a program that is part of a regular elementary school are eligible to vote and run in SBDM elections if their child is pre-registered to attend the school in the next school year.

Preschool programs outside of a regular public elementary school are exempt from having a school council.

Teachers Who Are Also Parents

The Attorney General has given an opinion that “a teacher may cast a vote for the teacher representative at his or her school and also cast a vote for the parent representatives at another school where his or her child is [pre-registered]. Additionally, if the teacher has been assigned to the same school where his or her child is [pre-registered], then the teacher may vote for the teacher representatives and the parent representatives.”

Preliminary Procedure

(Suggested)

- I. The PTA executive board needs to meet with the principal to determine:
 - A. The method for the parent election.
 - 1) A single meeting election
 - 2) A multiple meeting election.
 - 3) An election with the polls open several hours and/or several days.

PTAs are using various methods for the election process. Some are holding elections each day for a week with morning and evening hours or from morning through evening. Others are holding elections at a PTA meeting or a special event to encourage more parent participation. PTA recommends that, when the election is held at a meeting, there be at least two meetings at different times (such as evening and morning) to accommodate the working schedule of ALL parents.

- B. The date(s) for the parent election.
- C. If absentee ballots will be allowed.
- D. The deadline date for nomination forms to be returned to the school.
- E. The method of providing information on the nominees to the parents.
 - 1) Sending information on all nominees home to the parents.
 - 2) Holding an information meeting to provide each candidate the opportunity to speak for a specified time and to answer questions.
 - 3) Distributing information on the candidates to all voters as they come to vote.

[Note: All three may be used and will provide the best opportunity for ALL parents to be adequately informed.]

- F. Establish the following committees:
 - 1) Nominating Committee
 - 2) Voter Registration Committee
 - 3) Teller Committee

II. Send the first letter to all parents that includes:

- A. The parent election date(s) and time(s).
- B. The nomination form for prospective nominees to use to submit their nomination.
- C. General information about SBDM.

[See Sample Letter on Page 7]

III. Committees meet to develop and carry out procedure.

- A. Nominating Committee
 - 1) Determine the contents of the nomination form.

[See Sample Nomination Form on Page 7]
 - 2) Prepare the nomination form for the parent letter.
 - 3) Working with the school office, develop the procedure for qualifying parent nominees.

(Continued on Page 7)

SBDM Parent Election Procedure

Preliminary Procedure

(Continued from Page 6)

- 4) Receive, log and qualify all nominations.
[See Sample Nomination Log, on this Page]
- 5) Prepare ballots for the election.
 - a. Arrange nominees alphabetically.
 - b. Prepare sufficient ballots for all eligible voters (see page 4 for definition of parent and voter (see page 4 for definition of parent and voter (see page 6 for who can vote).

[See Sample Ballot on Page 9]

B. Voter Registration Committee

- 1. Working with the school office, prepare voter registration sheets of all eligible voters (see 5-b above).

[See Sample Voter Registry on this Page]

- 2. Establish the procedure to be used to verify voters during the election. Determine a schedule to ensure a member of the voter registration committee is at the voting site the entire time the polls are open (if that method is being used) or at the election meeting(s) from 45 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to begin until voting is completed.

[See Page 8 for Information on the Election and Teller Committees]

IV. Send the second letter to all parents that includes:

- A. A reminder of the dates and times of the elections and the information night.
- B. A list of all nominees.
- C. Information or a list of qualifications for each nominee. [See Sample Letter on Page 8]

V. Working with the principal, provide a notification of the election and a list of nominees to the local news media.

Sample First Letter to Parents

The (Name of PTA) will hold the election of the parent members of the (Name of School) SBDM School Council members on (Date(s)) at (Place) at Time(s).

A nomination Form is Attached to this Notice

INFORMATION ON SBDM SCHOOL COUNCILS

What is the school council? The council is the governing body for this school. It determines school policy for curriculum, staffing, discipline, scheduling, instructional practices, extra-curricular activities and other matters pertinent to the operation of the school. The council meets (list if an established council).

Who serves on the council? 2 parents, 3 teachers, and the principal.

Who may run for council? Any parent, stepparent, foster parent or legal guardian of a student who will be attending the school during the parent's term of office. A parent is ineligible if he/she is an employee or a relative of an employee of that school or the district central office, or a local school board member or the spouse of a school board member.

What are the terms of office? (Give date term begins and ends -- if a new council this will be one year terms; if an established council it may be one, two or even more terms.

How will I know who is running for council? The slate of nominees will be sent home with students, listed in local newspaper by (give date) and an information night will be held (give date, place, time).

If I want to run for the council, what do I do? Complete the attached nomination form and return it by (give deadline date). You may nominate yourself or another parent, if you have that parent's consent. Nominations from the floor will not be permitted.

Who may vote in the election? Parents, stepparents, foster parents, legal guardians of students attending school (give term of office).

When do we vote? Voting will take place (repeat time, place and date). Two parent members will be elected to serve on the council. There (will or will not be) absentee ballots allowed.

Sample Nomination Form

SBDM Parent Council Member

Deadline: Must be postmarked by (Date)

Return Completed Nomination Form to:
Name of Nominating Committee Chair
c/o (Name, Address of School)

Marked PTA "SBDM Nominating Committee"

Qualifications: A parent council member shall be a parent, stepparent, foster parent or legal guardian of a student attending the school during the council member's term of office. A parent is ineligible if he/she is an employee or a relative of an employee (father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son daughter, aunt, uncle, son-in-law, daughter-in-law) of that school or for the district central office, or a local school board member or the spouse of a school board member.

The Term of Office is _____ years.
Parents may nominate themselves or another parent.

Name of Nominee _____ Date _____
Address _____
Children enrolled in this school:
(name) _____

Nominated by: _____

I accept this nomination and hereby certify that I am eligible to serve on this council and meet all qualifications as described above.
Signature of Nominee: _____ Date _____

Please attach a single page resume of your background and experience. This information will be shared with voters before the election. Each candidate will have two minutes to address parents at the information meeting and an opportunity to answer questions.

Sample Log of Nominations for SBDM Parent Elections

Date Received	Name of Nominee	Verified by/Signature
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Signatures of Nominating Committee: 1. _____		
2. _____ 3. _____		

Sample Voter Registry For SBDM Parent Elections

School Number	Name	Election Date(s)	Signature	Date
1.	Adams, J. R.	_____	_____	_____
2.	Doc, Jane	_____	_____	_____
3.	Jackson, Dave	_____	_____	_____

SBDM Parent Election Procedure

Sample Second Letter to Parents

REMINDER

The (Name of PTA) will hold the election for the parent members of the (Name of School) SBDM School Council on (Date(s) at (Place) at (Time(s)). There will be an information meeting on (Date) at (Place) at (Time). [If this is held at the same place/time as the election, or not held, leave this out.] All candidates for the two positions of parent representative of the school SBDM council have been invited. They will each have two [or five, etc.] minutes to make a presentation. An opportunity for questions will follow.

The following have been nominated:
[List Alphabetically]

A one page resume on each candidate is attached.
[Attach the resumes of the candidates submitted with their nomination.]

Sample Ballot

Vote for Two

Indicate Your Choice by an X
Fold this Ballot in Half One Time

Candidates
(List Alphabetically) _____

Name of Candidate _____

Name of Candidate _____

Name of Candidate _____

Name of Candidate _____

Etc. _____

Sample Teller Tally Sheet

(Date)

Nominee	Votes Cast
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	_____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	_____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	_____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	_____
Etc.	_____

Sample Teller's Report

Number eligible to vote _____

Number necessary for election _____
[if it requires a majority]

Number of votes cast _____

Ineligible votes _____

[List in order of votes received (highest to lowest)]

<u>Name of Candidate</u>	Received _____	Votes _____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	Received _____	Votes _____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	Received _____	Votes _____
<u>Name of Candidate</u>	Received _____	Votes _____

Tellers' Signatures: _____ Chrm.

Prior to the Election

(Suggested)

- I. Absentee Ballots.
 - A. If the decision is made to allow absentee ballots, a procedure for receiving and keeping them secure must be established. Some possibilities are:
 1. Require absentee voters to come to the school, sign the registry of voters, vote and then place their own ballot in a sealed envelop which is secured unopened in the school safe.
 2. Require absentee ballots which are mailed to be clearly marked on the outside, "absentee ballot for parent election of SBDM council members." Ballots arriving at the school would be placed unopened in the school safe.
 - B. The decision to allow absentee ballots should only be made if there is enough time to inform **ALL** the parents in the school.
- II. Majority or Plurality?

Majority means one more than half. (e.g.: 51 is a majority of 100).

Plurality means more than any one else. (e.g.: the votes are 55, 52, 32; 55 is the plurality winner.)

The law does not state which kind of vote is required for the election of parent members of SBDM councils. Kentucky PTA recommends that each PTA school use plurality vote as the standard.

It is best if the decision is made at a full PTA meeting so all can be heard.

A **plurality** vote elects the two candidates who receive the highest number of votes on the first ballot unless there is a tie. E.g.: There are four candidates and 200 parents voted. The votes received are 95, 55, 53 and 32. The candidates with 95 and 55 votes are elected even though neither received a majority vote.

NOTE: [Using this method, it allows parent members of the council to be elected by a small number of parents.]
- III. Election Committee

The election committee is responsible for handling the physical part of the election – the room, tables, chairs, voting place or booth, etc. They need to meet with the school staff prior to the election to plan and secure approval for the use of space and equipment.
- IV. Teller Committee (suggest four members)

Tellers should be honest, accurate, dependable and have no direct personal involvement in the election or its results. The teller committee is responsible for counting the ballots and the security of the ballots until they are counted. (Continued on Page 9)

SBDM Parent Election Procedure

(Continued from Page 8)

Election Day(s)

(If held at an election meeting(s))

[Note: If the election is held at an election meeting, the PTA recommends that there be two meetings at two different times (e.g., at 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.) to accommodate the working schedules of **ALL** parents.]

- I. The election committee needs to arrive early enough to prepare for the election. This includes setting up the place for voters to sign the registry and for distributing the ballots, and preparing the method to distinguish between eligible voters and non-voting persons. The committee must also set up the method for a secret ballot and for the tellers to collect the ballots, and the place for the tellers to count the vote.
- II. The voter registration committee needs to arrive at least 45 minutes before the meeting(s) are scheduled to begin, with the voter registration sheets (sample on page 7). The following procedure is suggested:
 - A. Have each eligible voter sign the voter registry by his/her name, then
 - B. Provide each eligible voter with a ballot, or
 - C. Provide each eligible voter with a voter ID to be used during the meeting(s) to indicate who is eligible to vote (e.g., a colored strip of paper).
- III. During the election meetings(s), tellers have several responsibilities:
 - A. Distributing the ballots, if they are not distributed at voter registration,
 - B. Helping those attending into voting and non-voting sections (if that is what was decided).
 - C. Seeing that only those with the proper voter I.D. receive ballots.
 - D. Seeing that no person casts more than one vote.
 - E. Collecting the ballots, with the voter dropping the ballot into the container. (The teller does not touch the ballots.)

Election Day(s)

(If held over several hours or days)

Some PTAs hold the polls open for several hours, for an entire day, for different parts of the day (such as morning and evening), or for several days. If using this method, there should be at least two PTA representatives at the polling place during all hours it is open.

- I. The election committee needs to arrive before every voting session to prepare the polling place for the voter registry and the voters. In addition, it is the election committee's responsibility to be sure there is a secure container for the voted ballots that can be locked or sealed at the close of each polling session. A place must also be prepared for the tellers to count the vote after the last voting session.

- II. A member of the voter registration committee must be at the polls at all times they are open, with the registry of voters (sample on page 7). The eligible voters sign beside their name, then are given a ballot.
- III. At least one teller should be at the polls during all hours they are open to:
 - A. See that voted ballots are put in the ballot box by the voter. (Teller does not touch ballot.)
 - B. See that the ballot box is in a secure place when the polls are closed.

Counting the Votes

[If absentee ballots are allowed, open them before counting is begun.]

- I. Count and record the number of votes cast.
- II. Count the votes by the following method:
 - A. Teller #1 reads each ballot out loud.
 - B. Teller #2 reads each ballot silently, checking for accuracy, while it is being read out loud.
 - C. Tellers #3 and #4 each record the votes for each person independently, using a form similar to the sample tally sheet on page 8. Lines and slashes are suggested.
 - D. Ignore blank ballots.
 - E. Count votes when less than the correct number of candidates is marked. If a larger number is marked, record it as an illegal ballot.
 - F. Add any name written in to the tally and count all votes for that person.
- III. Prepare the teller report (sample on page 8). If this is an election meeting, the committee chair reads the results, then gives the written report to the president. If not an election meeting, the report is given to the president and principal. The secretary should inform all candidates whether they won or lost.

Sample Agenda for Election/Information Meeting

1. Call to order. Briefly explain the meeting's purpose.
2. Introduce the nominees. Give them each two minutes to speak, and if time allows, let them answer questions.
3. The Registration Committee chair gives the number of voters registered.
4. Introduce the tellers, who will distribute the ballots if not done at registration.
5. Instruct the voters on the voting procedure.
6. Instruct the tellers to collect the ballots, inquiring if all who wish to vote have voted.
7. Announce the polls are closed and send the tellers to another room to count the ballots.
8. When tellers return, call for the report. The chair re-reads it.
9. Announce the results.

The Role of SBDM School Councils

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITY

The school council shall have the responsibility to set school policy consistent with district board policy which shall provide an environment to enhance the students' achievement and help the school meet the goals established by KRS 158.645 and KRS 158.6451. The principal or head teacher shall be the primary administrator and the instructional leader of the school, and with the assistance of the total school staff shall administer the policies established by the school council and the local board.

TO MEET THIS RESPONSIBILITY, COUNCILS SHOULD:

- Collect, interpret, analyze information;
- Set priorities;
- Establish committees, review committee reports, consider committee recommendations;
- Monitor implementation;
- Evaluate achievement;
- Develop school plans;
- Make reports and recommendations;
- Work as a team;
- Act as a link;
- Hold regularly scheduled meetings;
- Conduct meetings in a democratic manner;
- Request expert assistance when needed;
- Maintain comprehensive minutes from each meeting;
- Solve problems;
- Solicit ideas from others on problems to be solved;
- Cooperate/collaborate with the school district, with other districts and other public and private agencies;
- Work cooperatively with groups such as the PTA or PTSA [councils have no jurisdiction over the activities or budget of a non-profit, independent, incorporated organization that works in the school, e.g., PTA].

THE ROLE OF ALL SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS IS TO:

- Attend all school council meetings and actively participate;
- Study education reform laws and district policy;
- Attend training sessions;
- Solicit input/give reports to people they represent.

THE ROLE OF THE PARENT MEMBERS IS TO:

- Report at all PTA meetings to keep parents informed and solicit parents' opinions on issues before voting;
- Increase broad based parent involvement at all levels through council committees, as well as school organizations, e.g., PTA.

BY LAW, SBDM COUNCILS:

- Are subject to open meetings laws;
- Set their own meeting agendas and frequency of meetings;
- Receive training;
- Develop their own bylaws/operating procedure;
- Have liability insurance provided by the local school board for all members;
- May request an alternative model to:
 - 1) Include members other than principal, teacher, parent (such as students) [request is made to Kentucky Board of Education – 1/3 of the voting council members must always be parents];
 - 2) Have someone other than principal as the chair.

WHEN MAKING DECISIONS, COUNCILS SHOULD KEEP IN MIND:

- Are the decisions legal?
- Are they in line with board policy?
- Are they within the budget?
- Are they targeted to student needs?

School Councils

WHAT COUNCILS DO:

- Develop policies to enhance student achievement and meet education reform goals.
- When a vacancy occurs, select a principal from a list of candidates recommended by the superintendent.
- Decide how many people to employ in each job classification, *i.e.*, decide how many teachers, how many aides, how many custodians, and so on.
- Provide consultation to the principal whenever there is a vacancy on staff.
- Select the following resources:
 - 1) Textbooks
 - 2) Instructional materials, *i.e.*, materials that help students learn or help teachers teach, other than textbooks;
 - 3) Student support services, *i.e.*, services that help students become ready and able to learn; and
 - 4) Professional development (65% of funding).
- Determine
 - 1) The local school budget;
 - 2) The organization of ungraded primary; and
 - 3) A comprehensive school safety plan.
- Set policy in the following areas:
 - 1) Enhancing the school environment;
 - 2) Curriculum, *i.e.*, what to teach;
 - 3) Assigning staff time for both instructional and non-instructional programs;
 - 4) Assigning students to classes and programs;
 - 5) Developing the school schedule;
 - 6) The use of school space;
 - 7) Instructional practices, *i.e.*, how to teach;
 - 8) Discipline and classroom management;
 - 9) Committees; and
 - 10) Extra curricular activities and programs.
- Develop processes for deciding:
 - 1) Whether school is in line with state standards;
 - 2) How the school will use technology; and
 - 3) How the school determines whether its programs work.

WHAT COUNCILS DO NOT DO:

- Run the school on a day to day basis.
- Break local, state or federal laws.
- Risk health and safety.
- Risk lawsuits.
- Break contracts.
- Spend money the school does not have.
- Make decisions outside their areas of responsibility.

[For example, evaluate or fire staff, set salaries, raise taxes, set bus routes, assign students to schools, decide when to build new buildings, pay utility bills, etc.]

Local School Boards' Areas of Responsibilities

- Matters relating to formation of councils.
- Policies to facilitate the implementation of SBDM.
- Long range district planning.
- Equity for all students.
- District budget.
- Facility issues.
- Salary issues.
- Enter into contracts.
- Property sales and acquisition.
- Assignment of students to schools.
- Formats for school improvement plans.
- Professional development plans.
- Parent and community support and involvement.
- General personnel policies.
- Student outcomes.
- Student progress reports. (report cards)
- Requirements for record keeping for councils.
- Policies for appeal of decisions of a council.

Training for School Council Member

TRAINING REQUIRED

Newly elected council members **must** have six hours of training, no later than thirty (30) days after the beginning of the service year for which they are elected to serve, in the process of school-based decision making. Council members who have served at least one year must have a minimum of three hours of training no later than one hundred twenty (120) days after the beginning of the service year for which they are elected to serve. Council members elected to fill a vacancy must complete such training within thirty (30) days of their election. **It is not legal for parents to be excluded from training for council members.**

WHO PAYS FOR THE TRAINING?

The school district, according to law, must have a board policy that defines a process for the reimbursement of training expenses for all council members, **including parents. It is not legal for school districts, schools or school councils to refuse to pay training costs for parent council members.**

Kentucky law regarding school district funds states: "included in the school council formula shall be an allocation for professional development that is at least sixty-five percent (65%) of the district's per pupil state allocation for professional development for each student in average daily attendance in the school. The school council shall plan professional development in compliance with requirements specified 'by law and regulations.' School councils of small schools shall be encouraged to work with other school councils to maximize professional development opportunities." The council has authority to approve the spending of the appropriate funds. The balance of the professional development funds remains with the school district.

TRAINING PROCESS

PTA recommends that all members of the council—parents, teachers and the principal, both new and experienced—receive the same training at the same time. PTA also recommends that all experienced members of the council—parents, teachers and principal—received the same training at the same time. This will insure that **all** council members with equal experience hear the same information and receive the same advice and the same guidance. Changes in school-based decision making policies do not allow experienced council members to attend training for new members and count it as their mandatory training. This would mean that they receive the same training year after year.

SOME SUGGESTED TRAINING COMPONENTS

- The authority, duties and responsibilities of council members. (Required)
- An overview of the Kentucky's education reform and the school-based decision making component.
- An overview of other related statutes, regulations, program reviews, and Attorney General's opinions.
- Relationship between councils and PTAs.
- How to have productive and effective meetings.
- Decision making by consensus.
- Developing a decision making model that reflects multi-cultural perspectives.
- Effective use of the committee process.
- Developing council bylaws and policies.
- Developing school policies.
- Understanding school testing and other data.
- Developing an effective long range plan [school consolidated plan].
- Developing an effective communication system.
- Assessing the family/school relationship.
- Utilizing the school system as a resource center.
- Developing an effective personnel selection process.
- Budget development.
- Problem solving and identification.
- Conflict resolution.

OTHER TRAINING

Consider ongoing mini training in specific areas such as Title I, the exceptional child, school health, transportation, technology, etc. Training in these areas will provide information to help councils make better informed decisions.

FURTHER HELP AND INFORMATION

In addition to training, there is much information that can be used as a resource to gain knowledge and information that will assist parent council members in effectively serving the council, the school and their constituents—the parents.

- The Kentucky Department of Education produces a newsletter which can be found on the KDE website: www.education.ky.gov.
- The Kentucky Department of Education sends other information to councils through the school principal. If a parent council member is not getting copies, as your principal or contact the Kentucky Department of Education. Kentucky Department of Education provides extensive material on the KDE website.

www.education.ky.gov

Parent Council Members' Responsibility to their Constituents

All publicly elected officials have a responsibility to their constituents. Elected members of school-based decision making councils are no exception. The elected teacher members are responsible to the teachers and the elected parent members are responsible to the parents. This responsibility is to **ALL** parents, not just those who voted for or supported the parent member and not just those who might belong to the same parent group.

REPRESENTING YOUR CONSTITUENCY

The two parent members of a school council represent all the parents and legal guardians of every student in the school. It is important for the parent member to remember this fact whenever speaking on issues, taking part in consensus decision making, or voting. Most parent members of councils truly want to do a good job representing the other parents, but often do not know how. It is easy to rely on what friends and acquaintances say and it is easy to believe that their opinions are truly representative of all parents. But actually, they are just the opinions of a few. The question is how to know what most parents really want.

FINDING OUT WHAT PARENTS WANT

The best way to learn what parents want is to ask them. That is not always practical, however, for most schools have too many parents for any one person to talk to them all on a regular basis. Therefore other methods need to be sought. The best methods are ones which involve regular opportunities for open communication between **ALL** parents and the parent council members. Two of the best methods are:

THE PTA MEETING

The PTA meeting is a good place for communication between the parent council members and other parents to take place. It is recommended that there be time on the agenda of every PTA meeting for the parent council members to give a report of what the school council is doing and what decisions they are considering. There should be time for questions and comments, an opportunity for parents to speak with the council members either before or after the meeting, and an opportunity for written questions for those who do not feel comfortable asking in front of others. For this method of communication to be effective, it is necessary for the PTA to invite every parent to the meetings and to let them know they will have the opportunity to give input to the parent council members.

THE PTA NEWSLETTER

The PTA newsletter goes to all families that have

children in the school and is an ideal tool for written communication between parent council members and parents. It is recommended that the PTA set aside a section of each newsletter for council information. The newsletter can also be used to survey parents to determine their opinion on various issues.

The way to get these two methods of communication started is for the PTA president, PTA program chair, PTA newsletter chair, and the parent council members to meet either in person or over the phone and for all parties to agree to do this regularly. For parent council members to attend meetings, it is important to be aware of their work schedules and other commitments so meetings can be scheduled at times when they will be able to attend. **It is recommended that all PTA meetings be scheduled at time that the parent council members are able to attend.** Be sure to give the parent council members plenty of advance notice of the date, time and place of all meetings. For parent council members to put information in your PTA newsletter, they must be informed of the deadline dates for each issue of the newsletter at least a month ahead to give them time to prepare their articles.

THOSE WHO DON'T COME OR RESPOND

There are always going to be people who do not come to PTA meetings and people who will not respond to written requests for information or opinions. The question is often asked, "How can we reach these people?" The best way is to go where they are. Together with the PTA, contact neighborhood groups, churches and other organizations which have members who have children in the school. Put information in their newsletter and attend their meetings. Reach out to them.

TRUST

It is important to develop trust between the parent council members and the parents they represent. Trust means many things, including having confidence in a person; relying on a person's integrity; the stability of action or conduct and the absence of deception. There are several ways to build trust including: opening the budget; treating everyone as an equal to yourself; treating everyone as equal to each other; being accessible to constituents; acknowledging mistakes.

OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Examine your personal motives for wanting to be on the school council.
- Don't bypass the steps that bring in parent input.
- Commit your time.

School Council Meeting Procedure

WHEN SHOULD SCHOOL COUNCILS MEET?

School councils schedule their own meetings, but they have to obey Kentucky's Open Meetings Law, which protects the public's right to know about and attend meetings where government decisions are discussed or made.

How should meetings be scheduled to comply with the Open Meetings Law? For regular meetings, the council needs to have a regular schedule, with meetings held at times and places that are convenient for the public. That schedule must be made available to the public.

Special meetings can be held at times not listed in the regular schedule, but only if the following requirements are met first. The meeting must be called by the principal or a majority of council members. Written notice must be delivered to each member of the council. The delivery must be made by mail or in person, at least 24 hours before the meeting. If local newspapers, news services, radio or television stations have asked in writing for notice of special meetings, they must also receive written notice 24 hours before the meeting, delivered by mail or in person.

WHO MAY ATTEND SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS?

The Open Meetings Law provides that government agency meetings must be open to the public and all interested persons may attend. School-based decision making councils and their committees are considered government agency meetings. Exceptions are allowed only under very narrow circumstances described below. This law protects the right to attend but not the right to speak or participate. This is a council decision.

WHEN CAN A SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING BE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC?

The Open Meetings Law allows closed meetings only to discuss topics specified in the law, and then only after following a required procedure for calling a closed meeting.

WHAT TOPICS CAN A SCHOOL DISCUSS IN A CLOSED MEETING?

The Open Meetings Law lists 11 topics permitted at closed meetings, but only two are likely to apply to school councils:

- **Discussion of lawsuits.** A session can be closed to discuss proposed cases as well as ones that have already been filed in court.
- **Decisions about a specific person's rights.** Closed meetings are permitted to discuss the appointment of an individual employee. However, if the individual employee requests a public hearing, the meeting cannot be closed.

In closed session, the council may only discuss a particular person's situation. The law does not permit discussion of general personnel matters in secret.

Open Meetings Law Requirements for Councils and Committees

Called Regular Meetings

- Set a regular schedule at the beginning of the year.
- Make it available to the public.
- Letting the local paper know before each meeting is optional (and a good thing to do).
- Sending out a preliminary agenda is also optional. If you do send out a preliminary agenda, the council may amend it during the meeting and consider other issues.

Called Special Meetings

- Prepare a written notice that lists the date, the place, the time, and the agenda.
- Have either the principal's signature or the signature of a majority of the council members on the notice.
- Make sure each member receives the written notice 24 hours before the meeting, by U. S. Mail, fax or hand delivery.
- Post a copy of the notice prominently at the school building and the building where you will meet (if you meet at the school, one notice will meet the legal requirements).
- If the media has asked in writing for notice of special meetings, make sure each member of the media that asked receives the written notice 24 hours before the meeting, by U. S. Mail, fax or hand delivery.
- During the meeting, you must stick to the agenda that was in the notice.

Conducting a Closed Session

- Begin during a regular or a special meeting.
- Announce why a closed session is needed.
- Explain which section of the law allows it.
- Make a motion to go into closed session.
- Vote on the motion.
- During the closed session, discuss only the issue announced. Don't make any final decisions.
- Return to open session to make decision, to adjourn, or both.

Keeping Minutes

- Minutes **must** list all motions made and whether they passed or not.
- Minutes **can** list matters discussed and views expressed by particular people, but that is not required.
- Minutes **must** be made available to the public no later than the end of the next meeting.

MAKING RECORDS AVAILABLE

The council must make its records available to anyone who asks during the school's regular office hours. In addition, the law requires each public agency to:

(Continued on Page 15)

School Council Meeting Procedure

(Continued from Page 14)

- Designate an official custodian who has control of the records and makes them available to those who want to see them. Since this person will need to be available to receive requests, the principal or another school staff member without regular classroom duties might be a good choice. The custodian does not have to be a council member.
- Establish a procedure for requesting the records, including where the records can be seen and any fee to be charged for making copies. Such fees must reflect the actual costs of copying and cannot include costs of staff time.

HOW WILL SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS BE RUN?

The principal must chair the meetings [unless there's an alternative model approved by the state board of education], and someone at the meeting [not necessarily a council member] must be responsible for taking accurate minutes. Otherwise, the council will set its own operating procedures.

Some councils will want to make their decisions by consensus. Those councils need to be sure that they agree on a definite statement of their final conclusion, so that the person taking the minutes can describe the decisions accurately and so that the principal has a clear statement of what is to be done.

Other councils may choose to vote on final decisions, but ideally those votes will also reflect general agreement about how the school should proceed, not

only within the council but among staff and parents more generally. To be most effective, each council decision needs as broad a base of support as possible. PTA recommends that each council adopt by-laws addressing who will be responsible for taking minutes, how minutes will be approved, and any other procedural matters that the council wishes to include.

Kentucky Law says the following about public meetings:

- Rules should be adopted for conducting meetings.
- Each member of the council should receive timely notice of each meeting and the nature, objective and purpose for which it is called.
- A secretary should be appointed. The secretary should be present at all meetings and should record all proceedings, which shall be a public record open to inspection.
- Minutes of a meeting are not required to show any more than the formal action taken and the votes cast by members, or decisions reached by consensus. It is not required to summarize discussions nor record what any of the members said.
- A member cannot vote to approve meeting minutes he did not attend.
- A council should speak only through its record as to what was done when acting as a body at a meeting.
- Secret ballots cannot occur.
- A majority of the council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.
- Abstentions (not voting) are counted in the quorum.

See the "Commonwealth Bylaws" on the KDE website for a sample set.

Sample SBDM Meeting Agenda

1. Call to Order
The meeting is called to order by the chair (the principal, unless an alternative model has been approved).
2. Approval of Minutes
The chair asks if there are any corrections to the minutes. If not, the chair states the minutes are approved as printed. If there are corrections, the chair states the minutes are approved as corrected. It is not necessary to have a motion to approve the minutes.
3. Report from Committees
All committees of the council should give a report as to their activities and recommendations.
4. Discussion of Recommendations
The recommendations of the committees are discussed.
5. Individuals Wishing to Address the Council
This is the time for persons to speak before the council. Speakers may be limited to two to five minutes and may be required to give advance notice.
6. Groups Wishing to Address the Council.
This is the time for groups such as the PTA to speak before the council. **[Remember, school councils have no authority over the activities or funds of non-profit organizations (PTAs) working within the school.]**
7. Action Items.
This is the time for the council to make decisions, either by consensus or by vote.
8. Agenda for the next meeting.
This is the time for the council to establish what items will be discussed or decided on at the next meeting.
9. Adjournment
The meeting is over. The secretary records the time

Decision by Consensus

WHAT IS CONSENSUS?

Consensus Decision Making is a process used to ensure that every individual has input into a decision. It is a helpful tool in helping councils work together on goals, planning, implementation, problem solving, and decision making. Consensus is recommended for all councils, but is not required by law.

CONSENSUS MEANS:

- All group members contribute.
- The opinions of all interested parties are encouraged and acknowledged.
- Differences are viewed as helpful.
- Everyone has an opportunity to express feelings about the issue.
- Those who disagree express a willingness to experiment for a certain time.
- All members share the final decision.
- All members agree to take responsibility for implementing the final decision.

CONSENSUS DOES NOT MEAN:

- A unanimous vote.
- The result is everyone's first choice.
- That everyone totally agrees with the decision.

WHO NEEDS CONSENSUS?

Consensus is needed by those who must act together to make decisions, such as members of school-based decision making councils and committees.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The process of arriving at consensus requires committee members to make every effort to accommodate varying positions and differing opinions. If they manage to do so, they develop a feeling of ownership and a commitment to successful implementation of the final solution. Consensus decisions include the opinions of many, and eventual agreements are a product of open discussion. When committee members find it hard to reach consensus, they must reassess their positions to find areas of agreement and areas in which they are able to make more effort to accommodate diverse points of view. This strategy depends on the willingness of individuals to back off for personal interest after a certain point and at the same time to avoid backing off too easily. Its intent is to bring all parties to a mutually satisfying position on the problem under study. Consensus is only possible when there is an overriding commitment to the task and to long range goals

by all members. Each individual argues his part not to win it necessarily, but because he believes that his input and that of others will help develop a strong solution to the problem at hand.

ADVANTAGES OF CONSENSUS:

- Decisions are based on cooperation.
- Decision making expresses a win/win philosophy.
- There is an emphasis on group unity.
- All concerns are accommodated.
- More creative ideas are explored.
- There is a greater commitment to implementation.

DECISION MAKING COMPARISONS

Voting:

1. Considers two points of view.
2. Discussion divides group (formal).
3. Freezes majority and minority.
4. Faster but implementation slower.

Consensus:

1. Considers many points of view.
2. Discussion solidifies group (informal).
3. All sides feel heard and accepted.
4. Slower, but implementation is faster.

THE SOUNDS OF CONSENSUS BUILDING...

"Let's begin with a reaction by everyone in the group."

"Let me summarize what I hear you saying."

"Are we all comfortable with this recommendation?"

"Let me repeat what I think I heard you say."

"Let's begin by looking at this problem from a different perspective."

"Let me ask you..."

"I can see that point of view."

"Can everyone live with this decision?"

"Is anyone uncomfortable with this recommendation?"

"Does everyone feel like they have had the opportunity to express their opinion? Let me see if I can pull together our recommendation."

"Let's take some quiet time to reevaluate our positions and prepare a statement in writing to share in five minutes."

"Let's think about this question overnight and discuss it when we are fresh in the morning."

"Would we want to consider..."

"Working together is a positive move by this group."

The Role of Committees

The work of the School's SBDM Council committees is the backbone of school-based decision making. It is recommended that the policies adopted by the school council should be developed by committees of the council

Kentucky law states: "If a school council establishes committees, it shall adopt a policy to facilitate the participation of interested persons, including, but not limited to classified employees and parents. The policy shall include the number of committees, their jurisdiction, composition, and the process for membership selection."

STATUE STATES THAT

1. "The school council and each of its committees shall determine the frequency of and agenda for their meetings."
2. "The meetings of the school council shall be open to the public and all interested persons may attend. However, the exceptions to open meetings provided in KRS 61.810 shall apply." KRS 61.805(2) defines "Public Agency" as: Every state and local government board."... "Any board, commission, committee, subcommittee, ad hoc committee, advisory committee, or council.

BOTH THE SCHOOL COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEES ARE SUBJECT TO THE OPEN MEETINGS LAW. [See page 15.]

WHO MAY SERVE ON COMMITTEES?

Councils shall have a policy to include:

- Parents
- Classified Staff

Councils may have a policy to include:

- Certified Staff
- Students
- Community Members

Councils should determine an appropriate number and category for membership according to the type and responsibility of each committee.

WHAT TYPES OF COMMITTEES CAN SCHOOL COUNCILS APPOINT?

- Committees may be appointed by a school council to address the functions chosen by the school council.
- Standing Committees are those which continue throughout the year and from year to year. Examples are: 1. Budget; 2. Curriculum; 3. Student Support Services.
- Ad Hoc Committees are those established for a specific purpose and a specific time. Examples are: 1. Safety Committee; 2. Instructional Materials Committee; 3. Discipline Committee. Possible committees include but are not limited to: budget/finance; discipline; technology' schedule/school day; school space; student

assignments; textbooks; student support services; school climate/safety; planning/transformation; curriculum/instruction; professional development; instructional practices; staff assignments; personnel screening; instructional materials; parent/ community involvement; communication.

Although committees are not required by law, this structure allows more people to participate and makes the work of the council easier.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL TO THE COMMITTEES:

1. Focus on student achievement.
2. Provide meaningful assignments based on needs of the school.
3. Provide clear directions for what is to be accomplished.
4. Provide time lines for reporting progress and making recommendations to the council.
5. Make available needed resources for accomplishing task.
6. Provide agenda time for committee reports, questions, concerns.
7. Keep a finger on the pulse of the school and as needs arise, from committees to investigate, analyze, and make recommendations to the council.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMITTEES

1. Focus on student achievement.
2. Accept challenges, tasks, charges from the council, then investigate, analyze, and develop a faculty/parent consensus on recommendations to be made for council adoption.
3. The committee may also be asked to provide periodic updates to the council on the status of its work.
4. Committee members should consider their own experience, the experience of colleagues, and the comments of students, parents, and others when making recommendations to the council.
5. This council/committee relationship results in a "focus" for the entire faculty and school community.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COMMITTEES

1. Clear Purpose focused on student achievement
2. Informality
3. Participation
4. Listening
5. Civilized Disagreement
6. Consensus Decisions
7. Open Communication
8. Style Diversity
9. Clear Roles and Work Assignments

Consultation

Kentucky law requires that the school council be *consulted* prior to the principal making a recommendation to employ personnel or to fill a vacancy. The advice of the school council is valuable and necessary if the school is going to maintain a staff that is consistent with the council's focus, philosophy and direction.

Consultation cannot be delegated away by the school council and **must include a meeting of the school council** with at least a quorum present. The law does not allow the requirements of the law to be met by *consulting* with council members individually. **To meet the requirements of the law, the council must be consulted as a group.** It is also important to remember that the requirement for a quorum cannot be met by just notifying the required number (4 members of a six member council) of the meeting. **All council members must be notified.**

At this meeting, the council may go into closed session to discuss specific candidates for the position(s). The council may also remain in open session and discuss criteria and qualification for the position(s). The legal requirements for notifying the public of a special meeting (at least 24 hours) must be met.

The law states school councils shall adopt a policy to be implemented by the principal relating to the procedures to assist the council with consultation in the selection of personnel by the principal, including but not limited to meetings, timelines, interviews,

review of written applications and review of references.

Examples

1. "When a vacancy occurs, the principal shall call a special meeting of the school council. The school council shall determine whether they want to fill the position. Once this determination is made, the school council shall provide a list of criteria for the principal's use in reviewing and recommending a candidate to fill the vacancy."
2. "When a vacancy occurs, and a list of applicants is submitted by the superintendent, the principal shall call a special meeting of the school council. The principal shall provide the school council members with applications and support materials on each candidate submitted by the superintendent. The school council shall go into closed session to discuss all applicants. After returning to open session, the school council shall, by consensus or vote, recommend to the principal one candidate to fill the vacancy and shall prioritize the remaining applications. If not satisfied with the applicants, the school council may request that the superintendent submit other qualified applicants and repeat this procedure.

There is no requirement that school councils discuss individual candidates, but they may do so if they establish this requirement in their council policy. If a council does choose to discuss candidates, it may have access to the personnel records of the candidates, but **all council members must respect the confidential nature of these records.**

Securing an Exemption from SBDM

The law allows schools that "meet their goal" to choose to become exempt from school-based decision making if both the teachers and the parents agree to become exempt. This requires a vote of a majority of the teachers in the school and a majority of at least 25 parents of students enrolled in the school. That is a significant change from the previous law which only required a vote of the teachers.

PTA does not recommend that parents approve their school's becoming exempt from school-based decision making. When parents vote for exemption, they are also voting to give up their legal right to a say in what happens in their school.

If the school does decide to try to become exempt from SBDM, the law specifies that the vote be conducted by the parent-teacher organization. If none exists, the vote is conducted by the largest parent-teacher organization formed for this purpose.

In the opinion of the Kentucky PTA, the same rules on who conducts the vote apply as who conducts the election of parent members of an SBDM council. As stated on page 4 column 2, **"THE LAW DOES NOT ALLOW booster type parent groups, such as band boosters, athletic boosters or academic boosters, to conduct the [vote]."**

If the school is going to have a vote on whether or not to continue with school-based decision making ALL eligible parents must be notified about the vote and when and where it is going to take place. The quorum for this vote is 25 parents, as stated in the law, not what is stated as a quorum in the PTA bylaws. This means at least 25 parents must vote and a majority of those present (13 if there are only 25 voting) must vote not to continue with SBDM.

Reminder: It is not legal to inform just the 25 parents necessary for the quorum. If ALL parents are not informed of the vote, the vote would not be legal.

Developing Council Bylaws and Policy

Bylaws (See the “Commonwealth Bylaws” on KDE website for a sample set of bylaws.)

www.education.ky.gov

School-based decision making councils need bylaws to guide the process they will use to conduct business. Before writing or amending your council’s bylaws, PTA recommends that you obtain a sample set of bylaws from the Kentucky Association of School Councils, 859-238-2188, www.kasc.net

It is the council’s responsibility to make sure their bylaws do not violate any part of school-based decision making laws, state board regulations, or local school board policy.

The bylaws should include all items necessary to ensure that the council’s procedures will comply with all of these laws, regulations and policies. (Consider these sections similar to the ** and # sections of your local PTA’s bylaws, the required items.)

Some Suggested Parts for Your Bylaws

Purpose or Mission Statement: This section should state why the council was formed and what it is supposed to do, specifically referencing the law. The six learner goals and seven capacities (page 4 of this handbook) should also be included. All parents and members of the staff should receive copies of this section.

Membership: This section should include the law and the council’s procedure for compliance.

Selection Procedure: This section should include the law and the council’s procedure for compliance.

Officers: What officers will the council have? What is the selection procedure? The term of office? The job descriptions? The procedure for filling vacancies?

Committees: See the next column, specifically the first paragraph, and page 17 of this handbook.

Decision Making Method: See page 16 of this handbook.

Council Training: This section should include the law and the council’s procedure for compliance. Provisions can be made for additional training (see page 12 of this handbook).

Policy Development, Review and Appeal: This should include procedures for developing and amending council policy and a method to appeal a council policy.

Agenda Preparation and Distribution: Who prepares the agenda? What is the method for input from council members and non-members? The method of distribution to members and non-members? The time frame for input and distribution?

Record Keeping: Who takes and prepares the minutes? How are they structured, approved and distributed? Where are the minutes and other council records kept?

Requests for Public Records: This section is required by law and must be prominently displayed. Include procedure, time frame, whom to contact, fees for copies.

Communication: How will the council communicate with teachers, parents, other school personnel, the community?

Procedure for Amending the Bylaws: See *Robert’s Rules of Order* and the last article of your PTA bylaws.

Policy

Kentucky law states, “If a school council establishes committees, it **shall** adopt a **policy** to facilitate the participation of interested persons, including but not limited to, classified employees and parents. The policy shall include the number of committees, their jurisdiction, composition, and the process for membership selection.”

The law also states that the school council shall adopt a **policy** to be implemented by the principal in the following additional areas:

1. Determination of curriculum, including needs assessment and curriculum development;
2. Assignment of all instructional and non-instructional staff time;
3. Assignment of students to classes and programs within the school;
4. Determination of the schedule of the school day and week, subject to the beginning and ending times of the school day and school calendar year as established by the local board;
5. Determination of the use of school space during the school day;
6. Planning and resolution of issues regarding instructional practices;
7. Selection and implementation of discipline and classroom management techniques, as a part of a comprehensive school safety plan, including responsibilities of the student, teacher, counselor and principal;
8. Selection of extracurricular programs and determination of policies relating to student participation based on academic qualifications and attendance requirement, program evaluation, and supervision;
9. Procedures consistent with local school board policy for determining alignment with state standards, technology utilization and program appraisal; and
10. Procedures to assist the council with consultation.

In addition, the law states that the school council shall have the responsibility to set school **policy** consistent with district board policy which shall provide an environment to enhance the student’s achievement and help the school meet the goals established by Kentucky’s education reform laws. The principal or head teacher shall be the primary administrator and the instructional leader of the school and, with the assistance of the total school staff, shall administer the policies established by the school council and the local school board.

Effective SBDM Operations

TWENTY-FIVE HELPFUL HINTS

Adapted from Jim Guess, SBDM Consultant

AS A COUNCIL MEMBER:

1. Assume your decision-making powers with caution and after ample study and discussion.
2. Talk instruction first and routine operational matters later. After all, improving the instructional program gave birth to SBDM.
3. Remember that you are a policy-making body. Exercise that authority in a timely and efficient manner.
4. It is advisable to involve, interact and listen to those persons in your committee structure. Do not forget to provide them recognition in the process.
5. You are challenged to focus on the academic performance of your school with vision and creativity.
6. It is important to build on the positive and discard the negative.
7. Consensus decision making is strongly advised for most, if not all, of the council action. (There needs to be a process in place for times when consensus is not possible.)
8. It is important to be trusting, open, and honest with each other.
9. You are cautioned to be careful about individual biases getting in the way of the team approach.
10. Utilize all training and resources available to you from your school district, the Kentucky Department of Education, and other trainers.
11. At most meetings, it is helpful to utilize the brainstorming technique in an effort to better structure and implement our vision and strategies for improving the school.
12. Assist your school principal with the task of achieving effective daily operations; do not slow the process. (The principal must feel comfortable with discretionary powers within council policy.)
13. If the council member is not a strong advocate for the school—who is? Be proud of what you do, and more importantly, for what you accomplish.
14. Shared decision making means that you share these decisions with as many people as appropriate for the particular decision in question. That may include other system-wide resource people, the superintendent, the board of education, etc.
15. Confidentiality is not important, as you must protect school matters while protecting yourself.
16. Study the issues thoroughly enough to be reasonably sure it is best for your students or do not risk the decision.
17. Strive to make decisions on what you know to be true; not on what you perceive it to be.
18. Learn about the instructional processes being utilized in your school and attempt to determine its effectiveness.
19. Remember that when we share decisions we share responsibility.
20. Do not be misunderstood. Express what you want to happen in the school in policy terms.
21. Target your monies toward your primary task—improved student performance.
22. Councils are a governance body, but so is the school board. There must be coordination and cooperation for success to occur.
23. Ponder your perception of the school in July vs. your perception the following June. What contributions have you made toward change?
24. Listen carefully to all your partners in this process, then your decisions will be much better.
25. Remember that the reason for having school-based decision making councils is to improve the educational opportunities and performance levels of students in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Resources within the Kentucky Department of Education

School-Based Decision Making

502-564-4201

Comprehensive Improvement Plans

Legal Clarification of SBDM Issues

Professional Development

Trainers Network

Assessment and Accountability

502-564-2256

Curriculum

Program of Studies

Core Content for Assessment

502-564-2106

Extended School Services

502-564-4772

Financial Management

502-564-3846

KETS (Kentucky Educational Technology System)

502-564-2020

Legal Services

502-564-4474

Kentucky Board of Education Regulations

Special Education Issues

Multicultural

502-564-3791

Parent and Community Involvement

502-564-7056

Primary Programs

502-564-7056

Safe and Drug Free Schools

502-564-3678

PTA VISION

Making every child's potential a reality.

PTA MISSION

PTA is

- **A powerful voice for all children,**
- **A relevant resource for families and communities, and**
- **A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.**

KENTUCKY PTA VISION

Kentucky PTA empowers families, schools and communities through child advocacy efforts and is committed to an equitable, quality public education and a diverse, inclusive membership.

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