

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND PROCEDURES

1. How many members can a school community council have?

As many as the school or district decides. But there must be more parent/guardian members than school staff members, including the principal. Most school community councils have about 7-17 members.

2. Can a parent member work for the school in any capacity?

A parent can work at the school where he/she is a school community council member for up to six hours per week (averaged over the full year). This would include school custodians, playground aides, substitute teachers, bus drivers and others.

3. If a school determines that it will have 15 school community council members (eight are parents and only half are up for election in a given year), and only three parent members apply, does there have to be a parent election?

No, but the parents on the school community council choose someone to fill the unfilled position.

4. If a parent member resigns during his/her term, how is the position filled?

By a vote of the remaining parent members.

5. Can the school principal be the school community council chair?

No, but another employee member can.

6. How long can a school community council chair serve?

The school should set terms for chairs and vice-chairs consistent with school district policy.

7. How does a school community council decide the beginning date of a school community council member's term?

The school, in consultation with the school district, shall set the date for the school community council member's term to begin.

8. Who can vote in a school community council election for parent members?

All parents, including step parents and legal guardians whose children will attend the school in the immediately upcoming school year (or who are currently attending the school)-not parents whose children are home schooled or those whose children attend private schools.

9. We live in a school area where many families live in other school districts and others live miles away from the school. Can parents vote for school community council parent members electronically or by mail or fax?

Elections must be held "at the school;" they must be by "secret ballot" and voting must be "secure." If a school can accomplish the security, which may include assigning identification numbers or passwords, and if someone tallies the votes secretly (but maintains documentation of the votes) other methods that encourage parent participation (and are consistent with district policies) are acceptable.

10. What may schools do to accommodate parents whose only communication with the school is through students or by school staff visiting the parent at home?

In unusual circumstances, the school should err on the side of parent participation. If the only methods of parent contact is through students or school staff visits, the school should do whatever is necessary (send ballots/information home with students, staff delivery) to accommodate parents while ensuring and maintaining security consistent with district policy.

11. What information must be provided to parents by the school or the school community council?

- A meeting schedule for the year, within the first two weeks of the school year, that includes that date, time, and location of each meeting.
- A summary of the Final Report of the School LAND Trust Program Plan implementation for the prior year in the fall of the following year.
- A mid-year summary of the school community council's actions and activities to date.
- Notice of the parent election provided at least two weeks in advance of the election and must include the positions that are available, dates and timelines of elections, and instructions for becoming a candidate.

12. Must the school community council keep minutes of meetings? If so, what needs to be included?

Yes. Written minutes are to be kept and posted on the school website at least one week prior to the next meeting. They also must make and keep a recording of the meeting and label it with the date, time, and location.

Minutes include:

- the date, time, location of the meeting;
- names of members present and absent;
- substance of all matters proposed, discussed or decided;
- a record of yea and nay votes on issues;
- name of each person who is not a member of the school community council who is recognized by the chair to speak in the meeting and substance of what was said.

13. How long do school community councils need to keep copies of meeting minutes and recordings?

There is no set time, but three years seems reasonable.

14. Under the new laws about notice, what must the school community council do?

Post agendas on the school website as least one week in advance of the upcoming meeting, that include the date, time, and location, along with minutes of the last meeting. The agenda, with the date, time and location must also be posted on the front door of the school at least 24 hours in advance but it is not necessary to post the minutes.

15. Is there a requirement for how many members must be present to hold a meeting?

Yes. There must be a quorum (or a majority of school community council members) to vote. The school community council could have a discussion on items on the agenda, or receive scheduled reports, but no action can take place until a quorum is present.

16. What are the primary responsibilities of the school community council?

School community councils are responsible for preparing plans that are submitted to the school board for approval. They also should assist, as needed, and provide support for the implementation of the approved plans. School community council members are to represent the group that elected them to the school community council, as they make decisions and bring issues to the school community council for consideration. They may form subcommittees or task forces to address an issue or project and bring it to the school community council for approval. They are a good resource to school and district administrators in bringing issues of concern forward and in providing feedback, upon request.

The school plans for which the school community council has responsibility for developing are:

- The School Improvement Plan
- The School LAND Trust Plan
- The Reading Achievement Plan (elementary)
- The Child Access Routing Plan (all but high schools)
- They also assist in the development of the Professional Development Plan but this plan is ultimately approved and submitted by staff

17. Are charter schools required to have school community councils?

No. They must form a trust lands committee that has more elected parents than the combined group of "other members" on the committee in order to participate in the School LAND Trust Program. The "other members" are to be determined by the charter school governing board. The committee does not have any other duties or responsibilities in the law but could assume other tasks if they choose to and it was acceptable to the charter school's board.

18. May school community councils or trust land committees assume other responsibilities and tasks not outlined in state law or State Board of Education rule?

Certainly, and many do, as long as the tasks are consistent with state law, State Board of Education rule and district or charter school policy.

19. Is there a possibility for other parents and community members to participate with the school community council?

The school community council may establish subcommittees and task forces that can tackle a problem or work on a project for the school. They may appoint those that are willing and are best suited to the assignment. These individuals need not be elected and school community councils are encouraged to engage others in the work of the school as desired.

20. What happens if two parents get an equal number of votes for an open position on the school community council?

You may flip a coin to decide who serves or you may welcome both of the parents on the school community council and be grateful for the interest and service.

21. Is it acceptable for the principal to develop the School Improvement Plan or the School LAND Trust Plan and then just inform the parents about the plans?

No. The entire school community council should review the data, determine what should be included in the School Improvement Plan and choose a subset of the overall plan for their School LAND Trust Plan.

22. Can a parent serve on a school community council if he/she home schools her son?

Her son must attend the school for at least one full year of the parent's initial term.

23. Can anyone who comes to a school community council meeting speak and on any topic?

The chair may ask a visitor to tell the council the subject of their concerns and may decide to put the topic on a future agenda if time will not allow the issue to be heard in full on that day. If the topic is not within the purview of the council, the chair may ask the individual to take their concern to those who may address it.