

## SCHOOL COUNCILS

In accordance with the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1993 and Mass General Laws c71 Sec 59c, each school shall establish a School Council that shall be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Consulting with and advising the Principal to:
  - a. Establish educational goals for the school, consistent with the School Committee's "Goals for the Wayland Public Schools",
  - b. Identify the educational needs of the students in light of these goals;
  - c. Formulate a School Improvement Plan to advance such goals, to address such needs and to improve student performance;
  - d. Review the annual budget for the school.
  
2. Serve in an advisory capacity to the Principal. Although the School Council is a collaborative arrangement, the principal has the responsibility to make the final professional decisions on matters concerning her school.

The principal will determine the composition of the Council, subject to requirements of state law, which define the types of members who should be included and generally outline the relative numbers. The process and timing for selecting individual members is defined in the procedures for this policy.

The selection/election of parents, staff, students and other community members should produce a council that is broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity, as well as the diversity of viewpoints and opinions, of the school building and the community. Every effort should be made by all participants to encourage a wide range of school community members to become involved with School Councils.

The Council shall make every effort to make its meetings accessible to the full community, and to encourage participation from non-members such that all are able to contribute their voice.

School Council meetings are subject to the Open Meeting Law, and are to be run subject to the published School Council Procedures (BDFA-E). Every meeting is open to the public and community members are encouraged to attend meetings whether they are elected as voting members or not. Attending meetings is an instructive way to learn more about the workings of the School Council and may encourage people to later run for an elected position.

## **School Council Procedures**

### **Elections and Appointments**

The principal shall define the numbers of each type of member on the Council, parents, teachers, community members, and students, in accordance with state guidelines describing parity (that is, there shall be at least as many parents on each council as there are teachers plus administrators).

In addition, one seat on each School Council, will be added specifically for a parent of a student in the METCO program. This seat shall not be included in the determination of parity.

Appointing authority:

- The teachers shall be selected by the professional staff of the school.
- The parents will be elected by the parents of the school, with the election conducted by the school's Parent Teacher Organization.
- The PTO will select at least one interested citizen, and is encouraged to seek diversity and new members who have not previously served. The Principal can choose to select an additional community member.
- The high school student member shall be elected by the student body
- The METCO parent representative will be appointed by the METCO Director.

At the meeting following the annual elections, School Council members shall elect one parent representative to serve as co-chair with the Principal.

School Council elections shall be held in September and terms shall run one year from September to June. Members completing their second year of a two year School Council term shall complete their term in June of 2022. Any newly elected School Council member shall serve a one year term ending in June of 2022.

Should a member resign, their seat should be filled within 30 days, with their selection conducted in the same manner as the vacated seat.

### **Eligibility for Membership**

- A parent who has children in more than one of the schools at the same time may serve on only one School Council.

- The School Committee encourages participation from a variety of members, emphasizing those who are not already participating elsewhere. As such, parent organization officers and School Committee members are not encouraged to serve as members of the Councils.
- Community members and parents serving on the Council must be either Wayland residents or a member of a family participating in the METCO program.
- Community members, parents, and staff members who have a dual role in connection with the Wayland schools are encouraged to serve in their primary role. For example, a Wayland resident teacher who has children in the schools is encouraged to serve as a teacher, not as a parent.
- Membership shall be consistent with M.G.L. 71:59C.

### **Governance and Organizational Matters**

1. The Principal shall co-chair the Council and the members will elect the other co-chair. The co-chairs will establish the agendas and suggest the dates for the meetings. The Principal shall chair the meetings. In the absence of the Principal, the co-chair will conduct the meeting of the Council.
2. The Council will conduct its deliberations and give advice within the existing policy framework of the School Committee, pursuant to existing School Committee policies.
3. Any suggested deviation from existing policy or practice must have the prior approval of the Superintendent or School Committee (for policy matters). This is particularly pertinent to matters involving an Elementary School Council, as the Committee will insist on parity and equity in programs and services among the three elementary schools.

### **Meeting Calendar**

School Councils will aim to meet monthly, but must meet at least six times per year, during non-school hours. Frequent meetings enable the School Council to monitor their current School Improvement Plan, remain informed about school issues, and develop working understanding of the strengths and challenges of the school so they are well-prepared to assist the principal in preparing the next School Improvement Plan.

The first meeting of each School Council must take place by the end of September, and a meeting calendar for the year will be established at that meeting, though additional meetings can be added as needed. Once established, the meeting calendar will be shared with the Town, published on the school website and shared with the school

community via the schools typical communications. Special care should be taken to ensure all meetings are properly communicated to the Town and advertised to the school community prior to the meeting as required by Open Meeting Law, but as participation from the community is desirable, efforts to exceed Open Meeting Law requirements are strongly encouraged. This would include, for example, posting the meeting schedule for the year and reminders in All School News and the individual schools' weekly updates.

Toward the end of the school year, the Council should assemble a list of topics they would like to address in the following school year. This list should be broadly publicized and used to encourage those with interest in those issues to run for seats on the Council in the upcoming elections .

### **Operating Procedures**

School Council members are encouraged to work together and collaborate to ensure a representative voice from all segments of the community. Decisions not reached by consensus will be made by majority vote.

- All meetings must be conducted according to the requirements of the Open Meeting Law. The scope of the school council does not require, and therefore does not qualify for, executive session.
- Agendas shall be prepared by the co-chairs and provided to the Wayland Town Clerk in order to meet the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, at least 48 hours prior to scheduled meetings. Members should submit items for inclusion on the agenda to either co-chair.
- Each agenda will be provided to the school council members prior to the meeting in a timely manner.
- The Superintendent, any member of the staff, any parent, any student, or any member of the council who wishes to have an item included on the agenda may request its inclusion to the Principal and Co-Chair no later than three days prior to the meeting. The council is encouraged to include these items of interest on the council's agenda. In organizing its agenda, the council should first focus on current topics prior to revisiting previously made decisions. Items previously decided may be revisited if new information has come to light that changes previously made decisions. Members of the school community are also encouraged to submit to the co-chairs suggestions for topics for the School Council to discuss.
- All meetings will be conducted in accordance with the prepared agenda.
- Discussion should be limited to items on the agenda items; additional items should be placed on a future agenda so they can be properly posted to provide the public with notice. Matters that were not anticipated when the agenda was

submitted can be discussed when that discussion is time-sensitive; otherwise, they should be postponed until the next meeting.

- Minutes of each meeting should be formally approved at the subsequent meeting. In addition, informal minutes or updates should be made promptly available to the school community in order to keep the school community updated on the school council's work.
- Official records for each school council meeting will also be kept at the school.
- The Superintendent shall receive agendas and minutes of all School Council meetings. The Superintendent shall provide copies of these materials to members of the School Committee for approval.

### **Sharing Information and Encouraging Participation**

Each schools' School Council will establish a webpage on its school website. The webpage will include at least the following:

- (a) The names and terms of all School Council members
- (b) The meeting dates for the current school year
- (c) Agendas and minutes for all School Council meetings.

Whenever practical, School Council meetings shall enable remote participation during the meeting, and shall be recorded and posted for later public access.

The Councils are encouraged to hold at least one meeting each year in Boston.

Upcoming meetings shall be announced in the school newsletter. Community members should be encouraged to attend, to offer their suggestions for agenda topics, and to provide feedback to the Council.

### **Training**

The School Committee will arrange for annual training for the School Council, and will solicit feedback from school council training participants to ensure that training provides a constructive and supportive environment. Training shall cover both Open Meeting Law and the purpose of the School Council.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. c.71:38Q, 71:59C

CROSS REF.: KCB, Community Involvement in Decision-Making

Approved by School Committee: September 22, 2021