



School Council Organization and Procedure

Why were school councils established by the Education Reform Act of 2000?

- ▶ To improve communication and participation of parents and the community in the management and operation of schools.
- ▶ Parents and the community are critical to the success of students and schools.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 (a)

How can school councils make a difference?

- ▶ Bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation to solve difficult education problems
- ▶ Improve academic achievement
- ▶ Provide support for teachers and administrators
- ▶ Bring parents into the school-based decision making process

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 (a)

What is the purpose of school councils?

- ▶ To help the local board of education develop and nurture participation
- ▶ To bring parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators to create a better understanding of and mutual respect for each other's concerns
- ▶ To share ideas for school improvement

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 (a)

What is the local governance structure of public schools?

- The management and control of schools is the responsibility of the local board of education. The board determines the policies and procedures and sets the expectations for the system.
- The board of education is accountable to the voters in their districts.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 (b)

What is the local governance structure of public schools?

- The superintendent is hired by the local board of education to run the school system.
- The superintendent is accountable to the board of education.
- The principal is the school leader.
- The principal is accountable to the superintendent.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-85 (b)

What is the role of school councils?

- School councils are policy level advisory bodies.
- School councils represent the community of parents and businesses.
- School council members are accountable to the constituents they serve.

What is the mission of school councils?

To Focus on Student Achievement

How do school councils accomplish their mission?

By providing advice and recommendations to the *school principal* and, when appropriate, the *superintendent* and the *local board of education* on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (s)

What are some topics school councils can address?

- ▶ The law specifically mentions 14 topics on which school councils may offer advice and make recommendations. The law also states that the school council is not limited to these topics.
- ▶ The 14 topics fall into three broad categories:
 - ▶ Student Learning
 - ▶ Local School Board Policies
 - ▶ Communication and Collaboration

Student Learning

- School improvement plans
- Curriculum and assessments
- Reports from the school principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, *including progress within specific grade and subject areas, and by school personnel*

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (s)

Student Learning

- Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement
- School-based and community services
- The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (s)

Local School Board Policies

- School board policies
- Extracurricular activities in the school
- Community use of school facilities
- School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans
- Student discipline and attendance

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (s)

Communication and Collaboration

- Developing a school profile, containing data identified by the council to describe the academic performance, academic progress, services, awards, interventions, and environment of the school
- School-community communication strategies
- Methods of involving parents and the community

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (s)

Brainstorm

- ▶ On which of these 14 topics would *your school council* want to ask for more information?
 - Who could provide the information?



What is a school council legally authorized to do?

- ▶ Advise and make recommendations to the principal, local board of education, and superintendent on matters relating to student achievement.
- ▶ Participate in the selection of the school principal in accordance with the written policy of the local board.
- ▶ Review and approve the School Improvement Plan.

What is a school council legally authorized to do?

- ▶ Review school site budget and expenditure information and class size by grade.
- ▶ Writing and submitting an annual report to the local school board.

What are additional school council responsibilities?

- ▶ Appoint committees, study groups, or task forces for such purposes as it deems helpful
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (o)
- ▶ Utilize existing or new school advisory groups
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (o)
- ▶ Provide a parent member to serve on an intervention team in the case of low school performance as indicated by the Office of Student Achievement
O.C.G.A. § 20-14-41 (a)(4)(A)
- ▶ Participate in any hearing at the local school ordered by the State Board of Education in case of low performance as indicated by the Office of Student Achievement **O.C.G.A. § 20-14-41 (a)(2)**

What are the expectations for all school council members?

- ▶ Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues
- ▶ Regularly participate in school council meetings
- ▶ Participate in information and training programs
- ▶ Act as a link between the school council and the community
- ▶ Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community
- ▶ Work to improve student achievement and performance

**O.C.G.A. § 20-
2-86 (k)**

Discuss



- ▶ What are some ways school council members can communicate with the constituents they serve?
- ▶ How can the school council encourage the participation of parents? Others?

How do school council members learn to be effective?

The local board shall provide a training program that consists of:

- ▶ One training that addresses the organization of school councils, their purpose and responsibilities, applicable laws, rules, regulations, and meeting procedures, and important state and local school system program requirements.
- ▶ Additional training programs shall be offered to school council members annually.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (b)

What are other responsibilities of the Local Board of Education to School Councils?

- ▶ To provide all non-confidential information including school site budget and expenditure information and class sizes by grade to the council *as requested* or as required by state law or state board rule

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (p)

- ▶ To designate a system representative to attend council meetings when requested

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (p)

- ▶ To receive and consider all recommendations of the school council and the annual report

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (q)

How does the local Board of Education respond to school council recommendations?

- ▶ Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports or recommendations.
- ▶ Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to a local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a council report or recommendation.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (q)

How does the local Board of Education respond to school council recommendations?

- ▶ The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or recommendation.
- ▶ The local board shall respond to recommendations of the school council within 60 days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (q)

Obtaining Information

The central administration shall be responsive to requests for information from a school council, except for information specifically made confidential by law.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86
(p)**

School Council Membership

Who serves on a school council?

- ▶ **The school principal**
- ▶ **A number of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students to make up the majority of the council**

Who serves on a school council?

- ▶ **At least two parents** must be business persons
- ▶ **At least two certificated teachers**, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions, who are employed at least four of the six school segments at the school.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86
(d)**

Who may also serve on a school council?

- ▶ **Other businesspersons**, if desired, to be selected by the other members of the council
- ▶ **Other members** as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school related organizations

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d)

How are teachers and parents elected?

- ▶ The principal is to provide public notice at least two weeks prior to elections.
- ▶ The principal shall call a meeting of electing bodies.
- ▶ The electing body for parents or guardians consists of all persons eligible to serve as the parent or guardian representative on the council.
- ▶ The electing body for teachers consists of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as the teacher representative on the council.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (g)

Elections

- The school council shall specify in its bylaws the month in which elections are to be held and shall specify a nomination and election process.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (g)

- Officers shall be elected at the first meeting following election of council members.

Selecting Business and Other Members

- Selection procedures of the business members, *other than the required parent business members*, and other members shall be specified in the council's bylaws.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d)(5)

- The school council may choose to have students, staff, representatives of school related organizations or others on the school council.

What is the term of school council members?

- ▶ Two-year terms or as specified in the council's bylaws
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (e)
- ▶ Terms must be staggered when starting a council. One half of the parents and teachers will be elected to one-year terms; the others will be elected to two-year terms to begin the staggering process.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (e)
- ▶ Terms shall begin and end on the dates specified in the council's bylaws.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (n)

When does a vacancy occur?

- ▶ A member withdraws by submitting a written resignation to the council
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (c)
- ▶ An inactive member, as defined by the bylaws of the council, is removed by a majority vote of the members of the council
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (c)
- ▶ A member no longer meets the specified qualifications
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (e)

How is a vacancy filled?

- ▶ An election to fill a vacancy must occur within 30 days unless there are 90 days or less remaining in the vacated term.
- ▶ The election fills an unexpired term. It does not begin a new term.
- ▶ The election should follow the procedures in the council's bylaws.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (e)

Who are the officers of a school council?

- ▶ Chairperson- Must be a parent member
- ▶ Vice chairperson
- ▶ Secretary
- ▶ The officers shall be elected at the first meeting of the council after the election of the council members.
- ▶ The term of office for the officers shall be specified in the council bylaws.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (j)

The Principal shall:

- ▶ Set the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notify all school council members of the same
- ▶ Perform all duties required by law and the bylaws of the school council
- ▶ Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the local school superintendent and inform the council of responses or actions taken

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (r)

The Principal shall:

- ▶ Develop the school improvement plan and school operations plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review , comments, recommendations, and approval
- ▶ Aid in the development of the agenda for each meeting after taking into consideration suggestions of council members and the urgency of school matters

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (r)

The Vice Chairperson shall:

- ▶ In the absence or disability of the chairperson, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson
- ▶ Perform such other duties as shall from time to time be required by the school council

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (j)(2)

The school council Secretary shall:

- ▶ Attend all school council meetings
 - ▶ Act as clerk of the council, and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose
 - ▶ Give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the council
 - ▶ Perform other duties as may be prescribed by the council
- (j)(3)**

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86

Conducting Business

Quorum

- A quorum must be present in order to conduct official business.
- A quorum is comprised of a majority of the members.
- A *majority* of the members present, representing a quorum, must vote yes for a motion to pass.
- Adopting and amending bylaws requires two-thirds majority of the school council.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)

Bylaws

- ▶ The school council adopts bylaws as it deems appropriate to conduct business.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (h)
- ▶ The State Board of Education shall make available model council bylaws.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (h)
- ▶ A Bylaws template is available by contacting in the cluster superintendents' office.

Choices Defined In Bylaws

- ▶ The school council adopts the bylaws it deems appropriate to conduct its business.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (h)
- ▶ Bylaws must specify:
 - ▶ The number of members O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d)
 - ▶ Election and nomination procedures
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (g)
 - ▶ Selection process for additional members
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (d)(5)
 - ▶ Term of office - beginning and ending date and length of term O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (n)
 - ▶ Month of election O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (g)
 - ▶ Number of meetings (with a minimum of four)
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)
 - ▶ A definition of “inactive member”
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (c)

Meetings

- ▶ Must be held *at least* four times a year - the number of meetings must be specified in the bylaws
- ▶ Must be open to the public
- ▶ Must be notified by mail at least 7 days prior to the meeting of the date, time, and location of the meeting
- ▶ May be called by the chair or by the request of the majority of the members of the council
- ▶ Are subject to Open Meetings and Open Records laws

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)

Voting

- ▶ Each council member has one vote
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)
- ▶ Votes must be recorded in a book kept for that purpose **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (j)(3)**



Pop Quiz

How many affirmative votes are required to pass a motion with four members present?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

Answer

“C” is correct. Three votes would be the majority with four members present.

Agenda

- ▶ Items may be added at the request of 3 or more members. **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (r)**
- ▶ The agenda must be posted at the meeting site within two weeks of the meeting. **O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (e)(2)**

Brainstorm

What topic(s) would you suggest for the first school council meeting of the school year?



Brainstorm

Would this topic require:

- ▶ An ongoing discussion by school council members?
- ▶ Research by school council members?
- ▶ Further information from the principal or central office?
- ▶ A study committee to do research and report back to the school council?



Minutes

- ▶ The school council secretary must make the council minutes available to the public at the school site.
- ▶ The school council secretary must provide a summary of the meeting, subjects acted on, and members present within 2 business days of the meeting. **O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (2)**
- ▶ The school council secretary must send the minutes to school council members within 20 days.
- ▶ The school council adopts the minutes, as may be amended, at the next meeting.
- ▶ The school council secretary must make the official minutes available to the public following adoption. **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (l)**

Minutes

- ▶ The school council secretary keeps minutes and records votes in a book kept for that purpose. **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (j)(3)**
- ▶ Minutes must include:
 - ▶ Names of all council members attending **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (j)(3)**
 - ▶ A description of each motion or proposal **O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (e)(2)**
 - ▶ A record of all votes **O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (e)(2)**
- ▶ Roll call votes must be listed with the name of each person voting for or against. **O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 (e)(2)**

Parliamentary Procedure

- ▶ School council meetings should be conducted using parliamentary procedure which can be summed up as:
 - ▶ Make a motion
 - ▶ Second a motion
 - ▶ Debate a motion
 - ▶ Vote on a motion

Open Meetings

O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1

O.C.G.A. § 50-14-6

School Council Meetings

- ▶ School councils are subject to the Open Meetings Act. **O.C.G.A. § 20-2-86 (f)**
- ▶ A meeting is defined as a gathering of a quorum of the members of the school council at which any public matter, official business, or policy is to be discussed with official actions taken.
- ▶ All meetings are open unless specifically allowed by law to be closed.
- ▶ “Open” means open to public attendance. It does not require that the meeting be open to public participation.

School Council Meetings

- ▶ Meetings may be called by the chair or at the request of a majority of the members of the council.
- ▶ When discussing candidates for a principal vacancy, the school council may go into executive session. All votes must be taken in public.

Violations of the Open Meetings Act

- ▶ Anyone conducting or participating in a meeting in violation of the Open Meetings Act is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1000.
- ▶ Any action taken in violation of the Open Meetings Act is not binding.

Open Records

O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70

O.C.G.A. § 50-18-74

School Council Records

- ▶ School councils are subject to the Open Records Act.
- ▶ School council records are public and open to the review of any citizen at a reasonable time and place.
- ▶ Response to a request for open records must be made within three business days.
- ▶ Reasonable charges may be charged for time and labor to produce and copy requested records.

Confidentiality Law

Confidential Records

- Student records are not accessible to school council members.
- Personnel evaluations are not accessible to school council members.
- School personnel personal information is not accessible to school council members.

Effectiveness of School Councils

What are school councils doing?

- ▶ School councils spend a lot of time learning about:
 - ▶ Test scores and assessments
 - ▶ School budgets and teacher allocations
 - ▶ Student interventions and support teams
 - ▶ Curriculum and instruction
 - ▶ Discipline and other student policies

What are school councils doing?

- ▶ The most frequently addressed topics are math, reading/literacy, attendance, and parental involvement.
- ▶ Linking parent workshops with school improvement plan.
- ▶ Developing plans to reduce absenteeism and tardiness.
- ▶ Publicizing school improvement goals and achievements.
- ▶ Addressing a variety of needs in their schools.

School Council Evaluation

- There is no legal requirement that a school council be evaluated.
- Most effective organizations, however, do self-evaluations periodically.

Thank you for
participating in
School Council
training.

