

I. PURPOSE. In a standards-based educational environment, the priorities for student learning are established in law and policy and interpreted for action by the superintendent. The superintendent, central administrative team and principals frequently exchange advice on learning challenges. Site councils are established at each school to advise the principal on how to advance student learning through strong shared planning, communications and problem-solving. Specifically, site councils are intended to:

- A. provide input to help create and maintain an optimal learning environment at each school,
- B. blend the values and perspectives of community, parents, staff and students for effective school-wide results,
- C. foster effective communications on key issues among all stakeholders in a school,
- D. contribute to creative school-wide planning and problem-solving, and
- E. provide school input for the principal and superintendent on matters of District-wide interest.

II. FOCUS. Councils are expected to address matters directly and indirectly related to student learning. Because many curriculum, staff development, and instructional resource questions are decided by the District and not by individual schools, the site council will often address—not what to do, but how to do it well for the school’s specific population. The following examples should help guide site councils in determining what is/is not an appropriate focus for their work:

- A. Site councils should focus on matters directly related to student learning, such as the following:
 - 1. advancing the school’s Continuous Improvement Plan, based on its student achievement data.
 - 2. effective transition of students to middle school, high school, or post-secondary experiences
 - 3. relationship of school program to student needs (enrichment and remedial opportunities, before and after school support, etc.)
- B. Site councils should also focus on matters indirectly related to student learning, such as the following:
 - 1. school culture and learning climate
 - 2. safety
 - 3. deterrents to harassment; fair treatment for all
 - 4. support for staff and their working environment
 - 5. concerns related to school rules and student discipline
 - 6. planning for and improvement of school facilities
- C. Site councils should not focus on the following:
 - 1. problems or complaints related to individual employees, students or classrooms;
 - 2. personnel decisions made by the principal, or
 - 3. matters that fail to contribute significantly to student learning and/or well-being.

If a site council believes it is important to address a matter controlled by state or federal law, District policy, external regulations or negotiated labor contracts (i.e., District-adopted curriculum, graduation requirements, Special Education regulations, WIAA rules), the matter should be referred to the central administration, along with the site council’s input, for further attention.

III. SIZE, COMPOSITION, AND FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS. Because site councils are intended to blend perspectives of school stakeholders, they are expected to proportionately represent the school’s various stakeholder groups, meet enough to be viable problem-solving bodies connected to the real and timely issues of the school, and be of a workable size—large enough to be representative, small enough to be efficient, i.e. 10-18 members. If site councils function essentially as staff meetings, if they block progress rather than advance it, or fail to blend the interests and perspectives of students, staff, and community, they are not functioning in keeping with the District’s expectations. The following specific guidelines should be helpful to the schools in establishing or correcting operational guidelines for their site councils:

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- A. High parent participation is desirable at all levels. At the elementary and middle school levels, parent membership should be at 50%. While parents represent the interests of their elementary and middle school students on site councils, it is desirable to have students share that responsibility with parents at the high school level; thus, student and parent membership on high school site councils should be balanced, and combined student/parent membership should make up 50% of the total council.
 - B. Based on the goals to be accomplished for the year, each school's site council should develop and publish a regular schedule of meetings.
 - C. As a site council participant, the principal must represent the interests of students, staff, parents and community at all times.

IV. ROLE WITHIN THE LARGER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. Site councils advise principals on local school matters as part of a larger educational system. The larger system is intended to be both (a) inclusive and reflective of local values, and (b) effective and accountable for achieving common student achievement results. The following premises help clarify the role of the school site council within the larger system:

- A. While specific accountability is assigned to named individuals in a system, collaborative leadership is a District norm. District leaders believe strongly in the value of stakeholder participation in the decisions that will affect them.
- B. Site councils are established by the District as a means of adding value to the leadership and management of schools. They are intended to increase understanding, trust and support throughout the school system, especially by generating ideas improving communications, and removing barriers to understanding among stakeholders.
- C. Because many school-level decisions impact the larger system, the role of a school site council will often be exploratory, opening channels to the District Administration for system-wide consideration and providing school-level input on topics of District-wide interest.
- D. To be effective in their roles, principals are expected to share leadership with others; however, they retain ultimate responsibility and accountability for their schools.

V. COMMUNICATIONS TO STAKEHOLDER GROUPS. Effective communications among all stakeholders in a school is one of the five specifically stated purposes of a site council. Therefore, the council as a whole, and each member as an individual, must be responsible for effective communications with stakeholder groups. The following are expectations:

- A. Each site council meeting should include a structured period for direct stakeholder input.
- B. Reports of site council discussions, decisions and activities should be disseminated to all stakeholders.
- C. Individual site council members should understand that they are expected to communicate to and from the stakeholder groups they represent. Through timely posting of site council minutes and other materials on the District website, the councils are able to learn from one another and share resources.

VI. SUPPORT. Site council facilitators should know the purpose of site councils, roles and responsibilities of members, and should have skills in meeting management processes, consensus-building, conflict resolution, and District expectations. In order to fulfill the important function set forth for them, site council members and facilitators should have access to training, support, and orientation to the larger system to which they contribute. Each site council is responsible to meet this need for its own members. The District will support training for members and/or facilitators through on-line materials available to all buildings beginning September, 2005.

VII. OPERATING GUIDELINES. The District recognizes and appreciates that site councils operate in a wide variety of ways. These differences reflect the needs and interests of unique communities. However, the following guidelines are essential to the effective operation of all site councils:

- A. Accurate minutes should be kept and made available as appropriate to interested parties.
- B. A clear, open process for selecting site council members should be documented at each school.
- C. Provision should be made for rotation and continuity in membership and leadership.
- D. By-laws should be adopted and reviewed annually.
- E. Based on the five specific purposes of site councils listed on page 1, each site council should develop a process for assessing and evaluating its effectiveness and setting goals for improvement. This process should include:
 - (1) appropriate use of orientation/training materials provided by the District (beginning Fall 2005) to meet local needs;
 - (2) an exit survey of all site council members at the end of each school year, examining member perspectives on their site council experience, effectiveness of the council as a whole, and matters of importance for the following year.