

The A+ Education Reform Act of 2000 established school councils in Georgia to "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, and
- bring parents into the school-based decision-making process."

School councils provide advice, recommendations, and assistance to principals and local boards of education. The law details the composition of the council, its responsibilities, and procedures for conducting business.

The 2004 General Assembly in HB 1190 provided flexibility in membership, chairmanship, meetings, elections and trainings for school councils. The changes also provided clarity that school councils are to focus on student achievement and school improvement.

The 2007 General Assembly changed the composition of school councils, requiring that a majority of members be parents (or guardians) and that at least 2 parents be businesspersons.

Who Serves on a School Council?

School councils are comprised of a minimum of seven council members:

- The principal
- At least two certificated teachers elected by the teachers
- A number of parents (or guardians) elected by the parents, so that parents (or guardians) make up a majority of the council. At least 2 parents must be businesspersons
- Other members as specified in the council's bylaws

Council members serve a term of two years, or for a term specified in the council's bylaws.

What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members?

All members of the School Council must:

- Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues,
- Regularly participate in 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, and
- Work to improve student achievement and performance.

School councils are advisory bodies. They may provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and local board of education on any matter, including but not limited to:

- School board policies
- School improvement plans
- Curriculum and assessments
- Report cards issued and audits of the school conducted by the Office of Education Accountability
- Development of a school profile to the community
- School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans

- School-community communication strategies
- Methods of involving parents and the community
- Extra-curricular activities
- School-based and community services
- Community use of the school facility
- Student discipline and attendance
- Reports regarding progress toward meeting the school's student achievement goals
- Methods and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students

The role of the council in the principal selection process is determined in policy written by the local board of education.

How do School Councils Conduct Business?

- Councils meet at least four times annually. The number of required meetings are specified in the council's bylaws.
- The officers of the school council are a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. The chairperson must be a parent member.
- A majority of council members present is considered a quorum for conducting business.
- All decisions are determined by a majority vote of the members.
- The council may appoint committees, study groups, and task forces.
- Meetings are subject to the Open Meetings Act.
- Records are subject to the Open Records Act.

What is the Role of the Local Board of Education with School Councils?

The local board of education shall:

- Provide all information not specifically made confidential by law
- Assign an employee of the school system to attend council meetings when requested
- Receive and consider all recommendations, including the annual report, of the school council as follows:
 - Public notice shall be given of the board's intent to consider the reports or recommendations of the school council at a local board of education meeting,
 - Written notice shall be given to school council members at least seven days prior to the meeting of the board's intent to consider a council report or recommendation,
 - Members of the council shall be given the opportunity to present information in support of their report or recommendation

The local board of education shall respond to recommendations of the council within 60 days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

Are School Council Members Required to have Training?

The law requires each local board of education to offer training for school council members annually.