



Wrentham Elementary



School Council Handbook

February 2016

School Council

1. Preamble and Purpose

The WPS School Council was formed after the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA) in 1993, a law mandating that every public elementary, secondary, and independent vocational school in the Commonwealth establish a school council. The goal of the Education Reform Act was to ensure the meaningful involvement of parents and community members in the activities and governance of local elementary, secondary, and vocational schools throughout the Commonwealth.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 does proscribe certain aspects of how these school councils should be constructed and what the activities and responsibilities of these school councils should encompass.

This brief handbook is meant to provide families with an overview of the composition, activities, and operating rules of the School Council as well as some of the major portions of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 (the “Act” or the “Law”). The relevant section of the Act is attached as Appendix A.

It is the council’s belief that parent and community support are critical to the success of students and schools. The intent of these bylaws is to bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation to solve education challenges, improve academic achievement, provide support for teachers and administrators, and bring parents into the school-based decision-making process. The Council will meet regularly. The council has the authority to form sub committees. School councils are intended to:

- advise the school committees, and administrators,
- share ideas for school improvement,
- develop and nurture participation,
- bring parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators,
- create better understanding of and mutual respect for each other’s concerns,
- make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan required by state guidelines,
- assist the principal in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of the annual school improvement plan (SIP) to advance identified educational goals, address identified needs, and improve student performance,
- and improve management and operation of local schools.

The principal may accept or reject any recommendations of the Council.

School councils are advisory bodies. School councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principals and where appropriate to the school committee. School councils shall provide assistance and represent the community of parents and businesses and shall be reflective of the school community.

Its purpose is to assist the principal in identifying goals for the school and identifying students' educational needs. With input from various committees/cadres made up of staff and parents, the Council is also responsible for reviewing and monitoring the building budget, monitoring the current School Improvement Plan (SIP), and preparing a School Improvement Plan (SIP) for the next school year.

2. School Council Membership

Membership on the Council shall be open to teachers, parents, and business representatives and other such members as the school council may specify in its bylaws. Members of the school council shall not receive compensation to serve on a school council. Each membership is a one year term.

A quorum will be considered to be a majority plus one shall constitute a quorum and shall manage the property and business of the Council for a scheduled meeting. The council shall have at any time no less than 7 members and no more than 15 members. Members of the school council shall include:

- 1) Parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, Parent council members shall be appointed by, and from among, the group they represent;
- 2) It is recommended that at least one parent or guardian members should be a local business persons;
- 3) Teachers and staff from the school;
- 4) The Roderick and Delaney School Principals;
- 5) Other members as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but limited to, students, staff, parents, and representatives of school related organizations. Other business persons from the local business community may serve on the Council and shall be selected by the other members of the school council.

Elections

Elections shall be consistent with the Education Reform Act.

Potential teacher and school employee candidates shall submit a letter of interest to their respective principal by April 1st, each calendar year, to be considered for the Council elections to take place as designated by the principal.

Potential parent candidates are to submit a letter of interest by April 1st, each calendar year, to the parent sponsored PTO board, to be considered for the Council election as organized and determined by the PTO board at a monthly meeting prior to the end of that school year.

An employee of the local school system may serve as a parent representative on the Council of a school in which his or her child is enrolled if such employee works at a different school.

The principals of each respective school and one parent will serve as co-chairs of the Council. The parent co-chair is elected at the first meeting of each school year.

There may be more than two co-chairs if elected by the other Council members.

Members of the school council are considered to be public officials by the Commonwealth and, as such, are subject to conflict-of-interest provisions of various state rules.

3. Vacancy on Council

The office of school council shall automatically be vacated if:

- 1) A member shall resign;
- 2) The person holding the office is removed as a member by an action of the Council; or
- 3) A member no longer meets the qualifications specified by law;
- 4) The Council will determine, by a majority vote, whether the Council member will be removed due to inactivity (not attending at least four meetings per school year.) The effective date of a vacancy shall be determined by the school council.
- 5) The Principals then may nominate a candidate. An election within the elected body for a replacement to fill the remainder of an unexpired term shall be held within 30 days, unless there are 90 calendar days or less remaining in the term in which case vacancy shall remain unfilled.
- 6) Any vacancy on the council during the school year that shall remain unfulfilled, the principals may within their discretion seek and nominate candidates for council election by the elected body.

4. Meeting Notice and Location

The Council meets as a group once a month. The meetings of the Council are considered to be public meetings and are subject to the Open Meeting Law of the Commonwealth as well as the Public Records Law. Community members are encouraged to come to Council meetings and to participate during the period of time that is specifically designated for public comment at every meeting.

The Council may also meet on an as-needed basis from time to time.

A quorum of the Council is considered a majority of the members. The Council has established a set of meeting protocols (see below) that the members are expected to adhere to. Decisions of the Council are reached primarily through consensus although votes are also taken. Minutes of the Council meetings are taken and are available to the public as are the results of any surveys conducted by the Council or any other documents produced by the Council. The sub-committees of the Council meet as needed to conduct their work. These meetings are generally not open to the public.

5. Meeting Protocols

- Members should contribute as they feel comfortable,
- Members are to be respectful to time-arrive at time set, and follow agenda timelines,
- All members have the ability to suggest new business and request the chair person to make a motion,
- Chair persons are to recognize members of the public,
- Minutes are to be kept in accordance with applicable law and circulated to members for approval and posting,
- All meetings notices and agendas will be properly posted in accordance with Open Meeting Law at The agenda includes the start and planned end time for the meeting,
- Meetings begin on time, and every effort is made to end them on time,
- Cell phones are turned off or their ringers are turned off,
- Each meeting begins with review, amendment, and approval (by vote) of the minutes of the previous meeting,
- Only elected members of the council may vote, although members of the public are invited to give their input at specified times.
- At each meeting there will be a designated timekeeper and a designated minute taker. Minutes are distributed after the meeting for corrections.
- Members listen respectfully and speak honestly.
- Members raise their hands before speaking.
- Each meeting will allow for the creation of the agenda for the next meeting. As each agenda is posted, there is an opportunity to add topics that require immediate action or discussion as well.

Roberts Rules of Order, shall be the governing parliamentary authority for school councils in all cases applicable but not inconsistent with these bylaws.

- **Quorum and Voting Requirement**

Each member of the Council is authorized to exercise one vote. Proxy votes are not allowed. Voting members must be present to vote. A quorum of council members must be present in order to conduct official council business. At all meetings of the council, every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.

The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires a majority of affirmative votes by a full council.

7. Officers and Duties

The officer of the council shall be the chairpersons, consisting of the Roderick principal, the Delaney Principal and an elected parent chairperson, and a secretary. Officers of the council shall be elected at the first meeting of the council provided that the chairperson shall be a parent or guardian. The term of officers of the council shall be 1 year for the parent chair and secretary.

The chairpersons shall develop the agenda for all meetings, preside at all meetings of the school council, and perform such other duties as required by law or as shall be requested by the school council.

The secretary shall be appointed at each meeting, and 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 in a secure location at the school site. The secretary shall give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the council or the chairperson, under whose supervision the secretary shall be.

The minutes of the council upon approval shall be made available to the public, for inspection at the school office and shall be provided to the council members, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes. Minutes from each meeting will be made public and published on the school's website.

Council members may serve more than one term.

The council may appoint committees, study groups, or task forces for such purposes, as it deems helpful and may utilize existing or new school advisory groups.

8. Duties of the Principal

The school principals shall have the following duties pertaining to school council activities:

- 1) Cause to be created a school council by convening the appropriate bodies to select school council members ; set the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notify all school council members of the same;
- 2) Call meetings of the election bodies after providing public notice before such meetings:
- 3) Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the superintendent and inform the council of responses or actions of the superintendent;
- 4) Develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval; and
- 5) Provide progress reports regarding the school's student achievement goals.
- 6) Perform all of the duties required by law and the bylaw of the council.

9.Limitations

The Council is an advisory body and is not involved in the day-to-day administration or operation of the school. The Council has no authority over matters that are subject to Chapter 150E of the MGL. (Chapter 150E is the collective bargaining statute. It provides for employees to organize and bargain collectively with the School Committee on questions of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.) Likewise, the Council has no authority over hiring, firing, or any other personnel issue.

10.Job Descriptions

Chairpersons

1. Conducts meetings according to the bylaws.
2. Calls special meetings of the Council as necessary.
3. Is responsible for the orderly conduct of all School Council meetings.
4. Appoints subcommittees subject to Council approval.

The Presiding Chair Shall

1. Call the meeting to order at the appointed time.
2. Announce the business to come before the Council in its proper order.
3. Enforce the Council's policies relating to the order of business and the conduct of meetings.
4. Recognize persons who desire to speak, and protect the speaker who has the floor from disturbance or interference.
5. Use Robert's Rules of Order.
6. Restrict discussion to the question when a motion is before the Council.
7. Put motions to a vote, stating definitely and clearly the vote that results.

The chair shall have the right, as other Council members have, to offer resolutions, discuss questions, and to vote.

Duties of the Recording Secretary

1. To keep minutes of all regular meetings.
2. To take roll and indicate the members attending and absent.
3. To correct the minutes of the previous meeting(s) if necessary.
4. To record what is voted not the debate.

5. To note the name(s) of the member(s) who introduced a motion, as well as who seconded it.
6. To submit minutes to be typed and distributed.
7. To maintain records of minutes, copies of proposals put before the Council and other papers that document the work of the Council.
8. In the absence of both co-chairpersons, to call the meeting to order and to preside until the election of a chairperson pro-tem, which should take place at once.

Duties of School Council Members

1. To familiarize themselves with pertinent state school laws, regulations of the State Department of Education, and local policies, rules, and regulations provided by the Principal.
2. To take advantage of the various training opportunities which are offered for Council members.
3. To have general knowledge of the educational aims and objectives of the school.
4. To work harmoniously with other Council members
5. To vote and act in the Council meetings impartially for the good of the students.
6. To accept the will of the majority votes in all cases and give whole hearted support to the resulting action.
7. To represent the Council to the communities in such a way as to promote both interest and support.
8. To refer all suggestions and complaints to the Co-chair and Council and to abstain from individual counsel and action.

Appendix A

The Education Reform Act of 1993

A. The Law

Chapter 71: Section 59C. School councils; members; meetings; duties.

Section 59C. At each public elementary, secondary and independent vocational school in the commonwealth there shall be a school council consisting of the school principal, who shall co-chair the council; parents of students attending the school who shall be selected by the parents of students attending such school who will be chosen in elections held by the local recognized parent teacher organization under the direction of the principal, or if none exists, chosen by a representative process approved by the school committee. Said parents shall have parity with professional personnel on the school councils; teachers who shall be selected by the teachers in such school; other persons, not parents or teachers of students at the school, drawn from such groups or entities as municipal government, business and labor organizations, institutions of higher education, human services agencies or other interested groups including those from school age child care programs; and for schools containing any of the grades nine to twelve, at least one such student; provided, however, that not more than fifty percent of the council shall be non-school members. The principal, except as otherwise provided herein, shall have the responsibility for defining the composition of and forming the group pursuant to a representative process approved by the superintendent and school committee and for convening the first meeting no later than forty days after the first day of school, at which meeting a co-chairman shall be selected. School councils should be broadly representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the school building and community. For purposes of this paragraph the term "non-school members" shall mean those members of the council, other than parents, teachers, students and staff of the school.

Nothing contained in this section shall require a new school council to be formed if an existing school council fulfills the intent of this section, the parent and teacher members thereof were selected in a manner consistent with the provisions of this section and the membership thereof complies with the aforesaid fifty percent requirement.

Meetings of the school council shall be subject to the provisions of sections twenty-three A, twenty-three B and twenty-three C of chapter thirty-nine [the open meeting law].

The school council, including the school principal, shall meet regularly and shall assist in the identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school, make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan required pursuant to section 38Q1/2, shall assist in the review of the annual school budget and in the formulation of a school improvement plan, as provided below.

The principal of each school, in consultation with the school council established pursuant to this section shall adopt educational goals for the schools consistent with the goals and standards including the student performance standards, adopted by the board pursuant to section one D of chapter sixty nine, and consistent with any educational policies established for the district, shall assess the needs of the school in light of those goals, and shall formulate a school improvement plan to advance such goals, to address such needs and to improve student performance. The plan shall include an assessment of the impact of class size on student performance, and shall consider student to teacher ratios and other factors and supportive adult resources, and may include a scheduled plan for reducing class size. The plan shall address professional development for the school's professional staff, the allocation of any professional development funds in the annual school budget, the enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school, safety and discipline, the establishment of a welcoming school environment characterized by tolerance and respect for all groups, extracurricular activities, the development of means for meeting the diverse learning needs of as many children as possible, including children with special needs currently assigned to separate programs, within the regular education programs at the school, and such further subjects as the principal, in consultation with the school council, shall consider appropriate. In school districts with language minority student populations the professional development plan under this section shall specify how the plan will address the need for training and skills in second language acquisition and in working with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. Each school improvement plan shall be submitted to the school committee for review and approval every year. If said school improvement plan is not reviewed by the school committee within thirty days of said school committee receiving said school improvement plan, the plan shall be deemed to have been approved.

Nothing contained in this section shall prevent the school committee from granting a school council additional authority in the area of educational policy; provided, however, that school councils shall have no authority over matters which are subject to chapter one hundred and fifty E [collective bargaining].