

INFORMATION FOR NEW SITE-BASED DECISION-MAKING (SBDM) COUNCIL MEMBERS

English Version

WELCOME

If you are reading this handout, you may be a newly elected SBDM council member. You are about to begin a very important job—serving on your school’s council—and we want you to feel comfortable in understanding your role. If you are reading this in Spanish it is possible that your children are relatively new to Kentucky schools. So first, it might be helpful to learn a bit of history about Kentucky’s schools and the formation of school councils.



THE BIG PICTURE

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and School Councils

In 1989 the Supreme Court ruled that Kentucky’s school funding formula was unconstitutional. At this time, wealthier districts were able to provide students with better services and opportunities, while poorer districts could not match this level of services. Shortly after this, in 1990 the Kentucky legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA)

which required more equal funding for all districts. KERA also included goals for students, set up a testing system for accountability and required that each school elect a school council to help figure out how each school could reach high standards.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

Your council will have many jobs and decisions to make in the coming year, but the most important question to keep in mind is this: **How can we work together to make sure all students achieve at the highest level?** If your council keeps this idea in the forefront, you will be focused on the most important thing.



THE JOB OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

Now that we’ve talked about the most important thing councils do, let’s get down to more specifics. On the next page you will see 5 big areas where councils make policy or decisions.

Councils have many responsibilities and your term on the council will be a continual learning experience. You cannot know everything when you begin serving on a council. After you attend a new member training and a few meetings at your school, you will begin to understand the very important task you have in serving as a school council member.

Let’s look at little more closely at the 5 basic areas of council responsibility.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Curriculum means the content students are expected to learn and instruction is about how the students will be taught. The council decides the curriculum and it needs to address the KY Core Content and the KY Program of Studies. The *Instruction* policy outlines how teachers instruct students in ways that allow everyone to learn.



PLANNING AND BUDGET

The School Improvement Plan

The central part of your work as a council will be to work with your School Improvement Plan. Your school already has a plan and you should review that as soon as possible. Your school plan is made up of parts (components) which identify an important priority that needs attention. Then there are goals and objectives which suggest a way to reach that goal.



Much of your job as a council member will be to review, carry out and revise that plan throughout the school year to make sure your school is on track in meeting its goals. This review process is called the “Implementation and Impact Check” and you will learn more about this in your SBDM training and as you work with your council.

Reviewing CATS data:

Another important planning job is to review your school’s test scores from the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). A school’s CATS scores are a combination of three things:

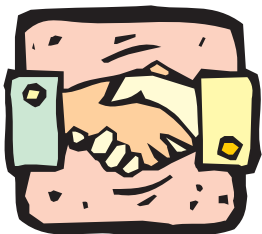
The Kentucky Core Content Test (a test which includes multiple choice and written response questions)

The CTBS test (a national test which compares students to a national standard)
A writing portfolio (student classroom writing which has been edited and improved over time)

All Kentucky students take the CATS tests in April. Student’s individual scores are combined to create an accountability index for each school. The school’s accountability index is a score on a 0 to 140 scale. The state has a goal of having each school reach an accountability index of 100 by the year 2014. Many Kentucky schools have already reached their goal (and surpassed) their goal of 100. Your school’s improvement plan should be focused on how your school is going to reach that goal of 100.

Budget

The council is also responsible for allocating money in the school’s budget. It is important to put your resources to use in ways that will enable the school to reach its goals of improving student achievement.



PERSONNEL

The people who become part of your school staff are a vital factor for improving student achievement. By March 1 your district’s central office will let you know about how much money is available for your school to employ staff. The principal and the council make decisions about how many people to hire, keeping this budget amount in mind.

The principal will consult with the council before new employees are hired.

The council also has direct responsibility for hiring a new principal.



SCHEDULE, STAFF, SPACE AND STUDENTS

SBDM law also specifies that schools should have policies relating to the school schedule, assigning staff time, use of school space, and policies relating to assigning students to classes and programs. Schools also need to have a policy on extracurricular programs and activities.

BY-LAWS

Councils need to have by-laws — rules about how the council itself will operate. By-laws generally address issues like: how your agenda is set; who can speak at your meetings; whether decisions are made by vote, consensus or a combination; and how the minutes are shared. Good, clear by-laws help the council function well.



Each council member should be familiar with these by-laws. From time to time, the council needs to review the by-laws to make sure they are up-to-date and working effectively.

The chart on page 4 (What Councils Do) summarizes all of a council's major responsibilities from the SBDM law. It also gives a listing of the things councils should not do. Familiarize yourself with this handout and use it as a guide while you serve on your school's council.

In conclusion, remember that you are just beginning to learn about your role on an SBDM council. There will be a lot to learn in the coming months as you serve on the council. Your work is vitally important. Everyone has a role to play and you are there to add your perspective and help the group have a broader view of the school's stakeholders. Your comments and questions will make a difference for the children and parents in the school.

The task of school improvement takes effort from everyone. Educate yourself and take advantage of the resources your principal and others provide for you. Don't be overwhelmed, but find out what you can do to make a difference.

Here are some things you as a parent can do to help your school and your child:

1. Stay informed about your school's progress toward meeting academic goals
2. Volunteer to serve on a committee so you can learn more about the school community
3. Stay in touch with your child's teacher about his/her progress.
4. Volunteer to help in your child's classroom or through the PTO or other school organization.
5. Encourage other parents to become involved.
6. Ask questions and become an active supporter for educational improvement!

WHAT COUNCILS DO

PLANNING & BUDGET

- Policy on enhancing student achievement**
- Policy on how the school will analyze whether it is in line with state standards**
- Policy on how the school will analyze whether its programs work**
- Policy on how the school will use technology**
- Test score data analysis
- Achievement gap targets
- Comprehensive School Improvement Plan
- Textbooks and instructional materials
- Professional development
- Rewards money (if available)

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

- Policy on curriculum**
- Policy on instructional practices**
- Policy on discipline, classroom management and School Safety Plan**
- Policy on college level courses**
- Organization of ungraded primary based on critical attributes & individual student needs

HIRING

- Policy on consultation about vacancies**
- Consultation before principal chooses people for jobs other than principal
- Selection of new principal
- Decision on how many people to employ in each job classification

SCHEDULE, STAFF, SPACE & STUDENTS

- Policy on school schedule**
- Policy on assigning staff time**
- Policy on use of school space**
- Policy on assigning students to classes and programs**
- Policy on extracurricular programs and activities**
- Policy on wellness (K-5)**
- Student support services

BY-LAWS

- * Policy on the process of establishing SBDM committees**
- Optional policy on longer terms
- Agenda and frequency of meeting

WHAT COUNCILS DO NOT DO

- ⊗ Break state or federal law
- ⊗ Risk health and safety
- ⊗ Risk lawsuits
- ⊗ Break contracts
- ⊗ Spend money a school does not have
- ⊗ Create a successful school without strong support from the whole school community
- ⊗ Run the school on a day-to-day basis
- ⊗ Make decisions outside their areas of responsibility (For example, evaluate or fire staff, set salaries, raise taxes, set bus routes, decide when to build new buildings, pay utility bills, or decide anything other than what's listed above.)

Areas for which the SBDM law requires a written policy are in **BOLD**.

* The SBDM law requires a policy IF the council uses committees.