

Hamden High School Governance Council By-Laws

Article I: Name

The name of this Committee is the Hamden High School School Governance Council, hereinafter referred to as the “Council” organized under the authority of the state reform law, Public Act 10-111, as codified in Section 21(g).

Article II: Purpose

The School Governance Council shall counsel the Principal regarding specific matters related to the operation of the school with the exception of those matters such as personnel performance which are relegated by statute exclusively to administrative personnel.

Article III: Membership

Section 1

Number and Qualifications

The Council shall represent the diverse interests of the families and staff that make up the local school community. Every effort, therefore, shall be made to engage broad participation in the Council election process.

To meet statutory requirements, the Council will consist of fourteen (14) voting members plus up to three nonvoting members (depending on the type of school involved.) The following tables describe the members, the number of members and how members are selected.

Members of the Council shall include:

- a. Seven (7) parents or guardians of students currently enrolled in Hamden High School as voting members. Parents or guardians who are employed by the Board of Education, but not assigned to Hamden High School, are eligible to serve. Parents nominated for Council membership must have a child enrolled in the school for the current school year (or for the next school year in the case of May/June elections) to be included on the ballot.
- b. Five (5) teachers at the school as voting members.
- c. Two (2) community leaders within the school District as voting members.
- d. One (1) Principal of the school or his/her designee as a non-voting member.
- e. Two (2) student members (*High School Council only*) as non-voting members.
- f. Hamden High School Board of Education representative as a non-voting member.

Section 2

Term of Office/Tenure

- a. Voting members shall serve for a term of two years. No voting member of the Council shall serve more than two terms.
- b. Non-voting student members shall serve a one year term, and no student members may serve more than two terms.
- c. The term of office for all Council members shall begin as of October 1.
- d. In order to avoid having the terms of all Council members expire at the same time, the first elections shall create staggered terms of office.

Section 3

Resignation

Any Council member may withdraw from the Council by delivering to the Principal or the Chairperson or Secretary of the Council a written resignation, or by giving verbal resignation during a regular meeting of the Council. Such verbal or written notice of the resignation shall be recorded in the official meeting minutes.

Section 4

Removal

The Council may, by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of all its members, suspend or expel a member. Any elected member may terminate his or her membership by submitting a written letter of resignation to the Council Chairperson.

Section 5

Compensation

Council members shall not receive any remuneration to serve on the Council or its committees.

Section 6

Vacancy

The office of Council member shall be automatically vacated:

- If a member resigns,
- If a member is removed by action of the voting members of the Council pursuant to Article III, Section 4 of these Bylaws, or
- If a member no longer meets the qualifications for membership specified by these bylaws.

Any vacancy on the Council will be filled for the remainder of the un-expired term utilizing the election process. An election within the electing body for a replacement to fill the remainder of

an unexpired term shall be held within sixty (60) days of the date of the resignation, removal, or disqualification; unless there are ninety (90) days or less remaining in the term in which case the vacancy will remain unfilled until a replacement is selected by normal election/appointment processes as stated in these Bylaws.

Article IV: Selection Process/Election of Members

Section 1

Selection Process

- a. The parent/guardian members (7) of the Council shall be elected by the parents or guardians of students attending the school. Each household with a student attending the school will have one vote.
 1. The school Principal may enlist an **election committee** to assist in conducting the election. The committee would:
 - Schedule dates,
 - Post announcements,
 - Collect nominations,
 - Set up, administer in, and oversee the election process, and
 - Formally announce the results.
 - Representatives of existing groups shall be enlisted to help with the election process. (Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Teachers' Union.)
 2. The teacher members (5) of the Council shall be elected by the teachers of the school.
 3. The community leaders (2) of the Council shall be elected by the parent/guardian members and teacher members of the Council.
 4. Student members (2) for a high school council shall be elected by the school's student body.

Section 2

Election Process

A valid election process should include the following activities:

1. Election Committee

- The Principal may enlist an election committee to assist in conducting the election schedule dates, post announcements, collect nominations, set up and administer the voting itself and formally announce the results.
- The election committee should represent the diversity of the school and be unaffiliated with any potential candidates.

2. Call for Nominations for Parents and Teachers

- A call for nominations should be sent to all parents or guardians in the school to nominate themselves or other parents or guardians for the seven available positions on the Council. Every effort shall be made to provide nomination and election material in a language they understand.
- A parent is a person who is the natural, adoptive or stepparent of a child enrolled in the school and includes those people acting as legal guardian or register custodian of the child, such as grandparents.
- A call for nominations should also be sent to all teachers to nominate themselves or others for the five positions on the Council. *(The teachers at a given school shall be responsible for selecting their representatives to the Council. A nomination process should be conducted followed by a ballot. Teachers are those certified staff who perform the majority of their duties in a teaching capacity at that school. Paraprofessionals are not eligible to serve as teacher members of the Council.)*
- The election committee shall verify that those nominated are eligible and willing to serve.

3. Voting

- The ballot for the parent election should be distributed to each household. Each household of students enrolled in the school for the current school year (or for the next school year in the case of May/June elections) will receive one ballot. The ballot for the teacher election shall be distributed to all teachers.
- Voting procedures that will maximize participation shall be determined by the election committee.
- If more than one family resides at the same location, each family should be sent their own ballot.
- Parents/guardians are eligible to vote for parent representatives. A household can cast a vote for each open parent seat on the Council. In the first election, all seven seats are open.
- The official ballot shall be duplicated on school letterhead, with the ballots numbered sequentially.
- To ensure maximum participation, parents and teachers should be given sufficient time and multiple opportunities to cast their ballot – whether through dropping the ballot off at the school office or another community location or through the U.S. mail.
- If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, the voting process must still be followed. The full membership of the Council shall be completed by repeating the process of soliciting nominations and holding a second election.

4. Results

- Immediately following the election, ballots should be counted with supervision by the election committee or at least a school administrator, one parent and one teacher who are unaffiliated with any candidates.
- The Principal should announce the results and post the new membership of the council on the school's website.
- To avoid having the terms of all Council members expire at the same time, the first elections may/shall create staggered terms of office, using a lottery system. Drawing straws shall be used to establish two-year terms for half of the Council and one-year terms for the other half. Then an election process shall continue each year.

5. Community Members of the Council

- After the parent and teacher members are elected by their representative groups, they shall then elect the community members who will serve on the Council.
- A community member shall be anyone who resides in the school district or has a business or civic interest in the area. The parent and teacher representatives shall determine a process for soliciting interest from community members.
- Community members are defined as community leaders of influence in each community, including, but not limited to, religious leaders, non-profit leaders and business leaders.

6. Student Representatives

- High school student representatives to the Council shall be elected by the student body through existing student government procedures.
- In the absence of a student government, students shall be permitted to campaign for the position of Council representative at a general assembly of the student body and the student body shall make their selection by ballot. (or voice vote)

7. Principal

- The Principal shall participate directly as a nonvoting member of the Council or name a designee to the Council.
- The role of the Principal in terms of authority and responsibility for school management is not changed by the institution of this Council. Ultimately, the Principal is responsible and accountable to the Superintendent of Schools.

Article V: Officers/Responsibilities/Election/Term of Office

Section 1

Officers

1. The officers of the school site Council shall be a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and other officers the Council may deem desirable.

2. The **Chairperson** shall:

- Prepare an agenda for each meeting and publically post the agenda at the school site (and on the school's website) 72 hours in advance of each meeting of the School Governance Council.
- Preside at all meetings of the Council.
- Sign all letters, reports and other communications of the Council.
- Perform all duties incident to the office of the Chairperson.
- Have other such duties as are prescribed by the Council.

3. The **Vice-Chairperson** shall:

- Represent the Chairperson in assigned duties.
- Substitute for the Chairperson in his or her absence.
- Perform such other duties as to be assigned by the Chairperson or the School Governance Council.

4. The **Secretary** shall:

- Act as clerk of the Council.
- Keep minutes of all regular and special meetings of the school site Council, including attendance, summary reports, and all votes in a book to be kept for that purpose.
- Transmit true and correct copies of the minutes of such meetings to members of the Council.
- Provide all notices in accordance with these bylaws.
- Be custodian of the records of the Council.
- Keep a register of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of each member of the Council and others with whom the Council has regular dealings, as furnished by those persons.
- Perform other such duties as are assigned by the Chairperson or the Council.

Section 2

Election of Officers and Terms of Office

1. The officers of the Council shall be a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary. Officers shall hold office concurrently with their terms of membership on the Council.
2. The officers of the Council shall be elected at a meeting of the Council following the annual election of Council members, as needed. The Principal shall conduct the process of election of officers, as needed.
3. A vacancy in any office at any time and from any cause shall be filled for the unexpired term at the next meeting of the Council. A Council member does not have to be present at a meeting in order to be elected as an officer.

4. Officers may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the Council.

Section 3

Executive Committee

The officers of the Council (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary) shall comprise the Executive Committee of the Council.

Article VI: Duties of Council Members

The members of the Council are accountable to their constituents and shall:

- Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues.
- Regularly attend and participate in Council meetings.
- Participate in information and training programs.
- Act as a link between the Council and the community.
- Encourage participation of parents and others in the school community.
- Attend School Board meetings and other town meetings as necessary.

Article VII: Committees, Study Groups, Task Forces

The Council may appoint committees, study groups, or task forces for such purposes as it deems helpful/necessary in order to carry out the responsibilities of the Council enumerated in these bylaws. No such committee, study group or task force may exercise the authority of the Council.

Section 1

Selection of Committee Members

The Chairperson of the committee and members of the committees will be appointed by the Council Chairperson, subject to the ratification of the Council.

Section 2

Terms of Office

The Council shall determine the terms of office for members of a committee.

Section 3

Committee Membership

The Council may establish and abolish subcommittees of its own membership to perform duties

as shall be prescribed by Council. At least one member representing teachers and one member representing parents shall make up the subcommittee. No subcommittee may exercise the authority of the Council.

Section 4

Quorum

A majority of the members of the committee shall constitute a quorum, unless otherwise determined by the Council. The act of a majority of the members present shall be the act of the committee, provided a quorum is in attendance.

Section 5

Committee Rules

Each committee may adopt rules for its own government not inconsistent with these bylaws or rules adopted by the Council or Board of Education policies.

All committees of the Council shall follow the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act as required by statute.

Section 6

Record Keeping

All committees shall keep records of business conducted at meetings. The minutes will be kept on file in the Principal's office, published on the school website, and available at all times to the Council members. The minutes shall include the names of committee members in attendance, listing of topics discussed and committee recommendations.

Section 7

Reporting Responsibilities

Committee Chairpersons will present work plans and recommendation to the Council for approval. Each committee may make a report through its Chairperson at each regular meeting of the Council.

Article VIII: Council Responsibilities

Section 1

Mandatory Advisory Capacity Responsibilities by Statute

School Governance Councils serve in an *advisory* capacity and shall assist the school administration in the areas listed below:

- analyze school achievement data and school needs as they relate to the school's improvement plan;
- review the fiscal objectives of the school's draft budget and advise the Principal before the budget is submitted to the Superintendent;
- participate in the hiring process of the school Principal or other administrators of the school by conducting interviews of candidates and reporting on such interviews to the Superintendent of Schools for the school district and the local and regional Board of Education;
- assist the Principal in making programmatic and operational changes to improve the school's achievement;
- develop and approve a written school parent involvement policy that outlines the role of parents and guardians; and,
- work with school administrators in developing and approving a school compact for parents, legal guardians, and students that outlines the school's goals and academic focus identifying ways that parents and school personnel can build a partnership to improve student learning.

Section 2

Optional Additional Responsibilities

In addition to its statutory required responsibilities, the Council may:

- assist in developing and reviewing the school improvement plan and advise the Principal before the report is submitted to the Superintendent of Schools;
- work with the Principal to develop, conduct, and report the results of an annual survey of parents, guardians, and teachers on issues related to the school climate and conditions; and
- provide advice to the Principal on any other major policy matters affecting the school, except on matters relating to collective bargaining agreements between the teachers and the Board of Education.

Section 3

Limitations Placed on the Advisory Function

In addition to School Governance Councils' responsibilities, it is also important to recognize the limits of its advisory function. The duties of School Governance Councils do not entail activities including, but not limited to:

- managing the school;
- supervising staff;
- entering into contracts or purchase agreements;
- discussing individual issues between teachers and students and/or parents;

- determining student eligibility for school admission; or
- determining class allocations or student assignments.

All powers of the School Governance Council lie in its action as a committee of the whole. Individual Council members exercise their advisory authority/responsibilities only as they vote to take action at a legal meeting of the Council.

Section 4

Reconstitution of School

1. After being in place for three years, the Council may vote to recommend that a school be reconstituted using one of the following models for reconstitution:
 - Turnaround
 - Restart
 - Transformation
 - CommPact School
 - Innovation School
 - Any other model developed under federal law
2. However, the Council cannot vote to reconstitute a school if it was already reconstituted for another purpose, such as (1) the school was already reconstituted as a result of receiving a federal school improvement grant that was contingent on reconstitution; or (2) a reconstitution of the school was initiated by another source, such as the State Board of Education or the local or regional Board of Education.
3. The Board of Education shall within ten (10) days of receiving a recommendation from the Council for reconstitution hold a public hearing to discuss the vote of the Council. At the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Education or ten days after the public hearing, whichever is later, the Board shall conduct a vote to accept the model recommended by the Council, select an alternate model or maintain the current school status.

Article IX: Meetings of the Council

Section 1

Meetings

The Council shall meet monthly. The Council shall hold nine meetings each school year. Special meetings of the Council may be called by the Chairperson, the Principal, or by a majority vote of the Council. The Council shall prescribe the time, place and dates of its regular meetings. The schedule of the regular meetings shall be available to the general public and shall be posted in a manner available to the public at the school which should in addition include posting on the school web site.

All required notices of meetings shall be adhered to for all called meetings.

The meetings of the Council are subject to the provisions of the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act, Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200 et. seq.

Section 2

Place of Meetings

All official meetings of the Council shall be held at Hamden High School in a location determined by the Principal.

Training meetings provided by the Board of Education may be held at any location designated by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

All meetings of the Council shall be open to the public unless specifically exempt under the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 3

Notice of Meetings

Written public notice shall be given of all meetings at least 72 hours (3 days) in advance of the meeting. Changes in the established date, time or location shall be given special notice.

Section 4

Quorum

A majority of the voting members of the Council members shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business.

Section 5

Agendas

The Council shall establish procedures by which parents, community members and teachers can have items placed on the agendas of Council meetings. These procedures shall not present any unreasonable hindrances for parents, community members or teachers who wish to place items on the agendas.

Section 6

Conduct of Meetings

Meetings of the Council shall be conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws or state law, or an adaptation thereof approved by the Council.

Section 7

Meetings Open to the Public/Public Participation

All meetings of the Council, and of committees established by Council, shall be open to the public. Notice of such meetings shall be provided in accordance with Section 3 of this article.

Comments by parents/guardians, community members or staff not on the Council will be permitted concerning any subject that lies within the jurisdiction of the Council shall be as follows:

1. Five (Three) minutes may be allotted to each speaker and a maximum of twenty minutes to each subject matter.
2. The Chairperson shall not permit actions which disrupt or interrupt the orderly conduct of the Council meeting.
3. The Council, by a majority vote, decides to cancel or extend the 20 minutes allotted per item of the agenda.
4. No speaker making an oral presentation shall include charges or complaints of a personal nature against any individual Council member or individual employee of the Board of Education, whether named or not.

Section 8

Voting Rights

Each voting member of the Council is entitled to one vote and may cast that vote on any matter submitted to a vote of the Council. Absentee ballots shall not be permitted.

Section 9

Minutes/Documents

The minutes of each Council meeting shall be recorded by the Secretary and shall include the names of the members present, a description of each motion or other proposal made, and a record of all votes. Each Council member shall receive a copy of the Minutes with the agenda for the next regular meeting, at which the Minutes shall be approved.

Minutes shall be made available to the public at the School office. All votes taken at any meeting of the Council must be recorded and made available for public inspection within 48 hours of the meeting. The Minutes of any emergency special meeting shall specify the nature of the emergency and shall be available within 72 hours of the meeting.

All documents created or maintained by the Council are subject to the provisions of the Connecticut Freedom of information Act.

Article X: Amendments

An amendment of these bylaws may be made at any regular meeting of the School Governance Council by a vote of two-thirds of the members present, provided that the amendments have been submitted in writing at the previous council meeting, and are not inconsistent with applicable federal or state law, or Board of Education policy.

Article XI: Immunity

The Council shall have the same immunity as the Board of Education in all matters directly related to the function of the Council.

Article XII: Conflict of Interest

No member of the Council or officer shall have an interest in any contract with the school district, affiliated with the school district unless such interest is specifically permitted by statute.

“Interest” shall mean pecuniary or material benefit accruing to a Board of Education member, officer or employee or their relatives resulting from a contractual relationship with the school system.

Article XIII: Training

The statute (P.A. 10-111, Section 21(g)) requires the Board of Education to provide appropriate training and instruction to members of the Council to aid them in the execution of their duties, as described in these bylaws.

The Board of Education and the School Principal shall assist each new Council member to become familiar with and to understand the Council’s functions, bylaws, and procedures.

The Council shall be responsible for the training of individuals elected and/or chosen to a subsequent Council.

Article XIV: Relationship to Parent Organization

The Council shall establish procedures by which there shall be close and continual communication with the school’s parent organization (PTA/PTO). This procedure shall be developed in cooperation with the parent organization.

Article XV: Termination of Council

Only Boards of Education with a low achieving school due to failing to make adequate yearly progress in mathematics and reading at the whole school level are required to have a Council. Current law does not contain any provision for ceasing the operation of a Council.