



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
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School Advisory Council

Technical Assistance Guide

Bureau of School Improvement

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Section I: SAC Overview

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is a school-based group intended to represent the school, community members and those persons closest to the students that share responsibility for supporting the school's continuous improvement.

The school board is responsible, by Florida law, for establishing an advisory council for each school in the district and developing procedures for the election and appointment of advisory council members. Each SAC must include in its name the words "school advisory council." For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes \(F.S.\)](#).

Role of the SAC

The SAC is responsible for final decision-making at the school relating to the annual implementation of a School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SAC assists in the annual preparation of both the SIP and the school's annual budget as well as the evaluation of the SIP. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(2\), F.S.](#)

SAC Funding

[Section 1001.42\(18\)\(d\), F.S.](#), requires districts to provide schools with "school improvement funds" for the purpose of developing and implementing School Improvement Plans. In accordance with [s. 24.121\(5\)\(c\), F.S.](#), these funds shall include "discretionary lottery funds."

Other SAC Funds

In addition to participating in the development and implementation of school improvement plans, SACs also play a role in determining how to distribute Florida School Recognition funds also known as "A+ funds."

In accordance with [s. 1008.36, F.S.](#), schools that receive a school grade of "A," improve by at least one letter grade, or improve more than one letter grade and sustain the improvement the following year qualify to receive school recognition funds.

The funds may be used for nonrecurring, performance-based incentives for the faculty and staff, nonrecurring expenditures for educational equipment or materials to assist in maintaining and improving student performance, or temporary personnel for the school to assist in maintaining and improving student performance.

Determination for expenditures must be approved jointly by the SAC and school staff by February 1. If the groups are not able to reach an agreement by the deadline, the funds must be equally distributed to all classroom teachers currently teaching in the school.

If a school selected to receive a school recognition award is no longer in existence at the time the award is paid, the district superintendent must distribute the funds to teachers who taught at the school in the previous year in the form of a one-time bonus.

Composition of the SAC

A SAC should be composed of the principal and an appropriately balanced number of teachers, education support employees, students, parents, other business leaders and community citizens who

are representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school. Certain members are elected by their peers, business and community members are appointed by the SAC and the principal automatically serves. High schools and career centers must include students. Middle schools may or may not include students. It is also a requirement that the majority of the members of the SAC are not employed by the district. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

The Bureau of School Improvement (BSI) encourages the inclusion of parents of children with disabilities on SACs, as well as teachers or support employees whose primary role involves working with students with disabilities, in an effort to achieve representation of an entire school community.

Charter School Requirements

[Section 1002.33\(16\)\(a\), F.S.](#), exempts charter schools from most statutes in chapters 1000-1013, including s. 1001.452, F.S., establishment of school advisory councils.

Virtual School, ESE Center and Alternative School Requirements

Florida Virtual School (FLVS) Full-Time K-8, FLVS Full-Time 9-12, FLVS district franchises and full-time school district virtual instruction programs are required to have School Improvement Plans and school advisory councils. Virtual instruction programs managed by an approved provider, as described in [s. 1002.45, F.S.](#), are required to submit a SIP if the school has received a grade of D or F or a school improvement rating of unsatisfactory in the most recent grades release.

Department of Juvenile Justice Program Requirements

Pursuant to [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#), school boards are required to establish a SAC and annually approve a SIP for each non-charter school in the district, including schools operating for the purpose of providing educational services to students in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) programs.

However, [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#), allows school districts the flexibility of establishing a single district school advisory council for the purpose of developing and monitoring a school improvement plan that encompasses all DJJ programs within the district.

Sunshine Law

SAC Meetings are subject to Sunshine Law. All meetings of any board or commission of any state agency or authority, or of any agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution, at which official acts are to be taken, are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times. No resolution, rule or formal action of a SAC shall be considered binding unless taken or made by voting members at meetings which are open to the public and comply with the statutory requirements for open meetings. The board or commission must provide reasonable notice of all such meetings and provide members of the public a reasonable opportunity to be heard. For further information, please refer to district policies or contact district legal counsel.

Background Check Requirements

Districts are required to check volunteers' names with the sexual offender/predator database pursuant to [s. 943.04351, F.S.](#) However, districts have the authority to develop additional policies regarding criminal background checks for school-based volunteers.

SAC Training Requirements

The district is responsible for SAC training. Some education consortia also provide training. The Bureau

of School Improvement provides technical assistance and guidance on statutory requirements pertaining to SACs. Topics generally covered in SAC trainings include, but are not limited to:

- Structure, purpose, and role
- Family involvement
- Way of work
- Needs assessments
- Data collection and analysis
- Local demographic data
- School test scores
- School grades and school improvement ratings
- School climate surveys
- Developing and communicating the SIP to stakeholders
- Evaluation of the SIP

Section II: Membership, Roles and Responsibilities

Elections

The nomination and election procedures should be fair, equitable and clearly outlined in the SAC's adopted bylaws. The SAC must represent teachers, education support employees, parents and students who are elected by their respective peer groups at the school as follows:

- Teachers must be elected by teachers.
- Education support employees must be elected by education support employees.
- Parents must be elected by parents.
- Students must be elected by students.

Voting can occur at meetings or by mail, using written ballots or a show of hands. Ballots are counted, recorded, and retained. Ballots and voting records should be kept by a SAC officer, and the results are to be reflected in the official SAC minutes. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

Principal

The principal ensures the council is comprised of properly elected representatives, provides leadership in the development, revision, and implementation of the SIP, submits the SAC-approved SIP to the district for school board approval and keeps members informed of relevant policies and activities of the school, district, and state. Principals are required to serve on their school's SAC. For more information, see [s. 1001.452 \(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

Chair

Any member can be elected to serve as chair. The Bureau of School Improvement recommends that neither a principal nor a student fills this role. Some schools elect co-chairs so that a parent or community member and a school-based member can lead jointly.

- The chair is responsible for notifying members of upcoming meetings and votes. The chair, or designee, will facilitate the SAC meetings and inform the SAC of relevant issues related to school improvement activities. They also ensure that a quorum is present before an action item on the agenda comes to a vote and works in collaboration with the SAC secretary to ensure minutes are recorded and filed.

Secretary

Any member of a SAC may serve as the council's secretary. Depending on the SAC's bylaws, the secretary may be appointed by the chair or selected through majority vote.

- The secretary is responsible for keeping accurate, complete minutes and ensuring those records are accessible to the public (e.g., posted on school or district website). They also ensure that a copy of the minutes and agenda are kept in an official, designated location in the front office of the school. Additionally, the secretary is responsible for keeping accurate record of the council's membership, attendance, duties and special assignments.

Treasurer

Any SAC member may serve as the council's treasurer. Depending on the SAC's bylaws, the treasurer may be appointed by the chair or selected through majority vote.

- A treasurer manages an organization's finance and operating budgets. SAC treasurers maintain accurate record of a school's school improvement fund allocations and budget for the year. The treasurer may provide guidance to the council on allowable and unallowable expenditures. See [s. 24.121\(5\)\(c\), F.S.](#), for more information on allowable expenses.

Students

Student members of the SAC are considered full voting members.

Business Leaders and Community Members

The school board is responsible for establishing procedures for selecting business and community members. This includes a means of ensuring wide notice of vacancies and seeking input on possible members from local businesses, chambers of commerce, community members, civic organizations and the public at large. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\) \(a\), F.S.](#)

Multiple Membership Categories

The membership group is determined by the peer group which elected a person to the SAC. For example, if a person is both a teacher and parent, their membership on the SAC would be determined by the group that elected the person (teachers or parents). Note: the individual does not need to be elected by both groups in order to serve.

The method by which a membership category is determined does not exempt a SAC from adhering to composition requirements outlined in law (i.e., a majority of the members must not be employed by the school district). The following three calculations ensure compliance with state statute:

- Membership Group – The number and percentage of members that fall into each membership group (i.e., principal, teacher, education support employee, student, parent, business citizen and community citizen). Note: There should be at least one representative member for each group.
- District Employee – The number and percentage of members who are employees of the district. The percentage of district employees should be less than 50 percent of the total SAC membership.
- Member Demographics – Ethnicity, race and economic status.

Other Membership

Assistant Principals are not allowed to serve on the SAC. For the purposes of SAC, the term "teacher" includes classroom teachers, certified student services personnel, and media specialists; "education support employee" includes school employees not defined as instructional or administrative personnel. Per [s. 1012.01, F.S.](#), the term "administrative personnel" includes school principals and assistant principals. As such, assistant principals would not fall under the "teacher" or "education support employee" stakeholder groups for SAC membership. Assistant principals are welcome to attend SAC meetings, as is any member of the general public; however, they are not members of the council.

Replacing Elected Members

SACs are required to adopt procedures for replacing any member who has two or more consecutive unexcused absences from noticed meetings. When replacing any member, the SAC should follow the procedures outlined in its bylaws or in district policies. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)4., F.S.](#)

Community Demographics

An advisory legal opinion from the Florida Attorney General’s Office issued on April 8, 2008, [AGO 2008-16](#), indicates that the composition of the SAC must reflect the ethnic, racial, and economic community in the geographic area served by the school, rather than the district at large or the actual student population attending the school. Neither state statute nor an attorney general’s opinion offer a specific range for determining when membership is representative of the area served by the school. Therefore, school districts are encouraged to work with their attorneys to ensure membership reflects the ethnic, racial and economic community served by the school.

Secret Ballot Votes

Secret ballot votes are not allowable because SACs fall under the purview of the Florida Sunshine Laws and secret ballots violate sunshine requirements. See [AGO 71-32](#) for more information.

However, the [Sunshine Manual](#) states, “board members are not prohibited from using written ballots to cast a vote as long as the votes are made openly at a public meeting, the name of the person who voted and his or her selection are written on the ballot, and the ballots are maintained and made available for public inspection in accordance with the Public Records Act.”

Section III: Noticing and Conducting SAC Meetings

Membership Notice Requirements

[Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)2, F.S.](#), requires SACs to give at least three business days advance notice in writing to all members of the SAC on any matter that is scheduled to come before the council for a vote. This requirement ensures that members are notified of the vote to take place so that the SAC will have the necessary quorum. Meeting dates can be posted on school websites, marquees, bulletin boards, published in newsletters, announcements, local newspapers or broadcast on TV.

Public Notice Requirements

Because SACs fall under the purview of open government laws, reasonable notice of all meetings must be provided to the public. More information can be found in the [Sunshine Manual](#). Though “reasonable notice” is not defined in law, BSI suggests the following guidelines in alignment with recommendations from the Office of the Attorney General:

- The notice should contain the time and place of the meeting and, if available, an agenda. If no agenda is available, the notice should include a statement of the general subject matter.
- The notice should be prominently displayed in the school front office and be accessible.
- The notice should be made to the public at least 10 days in advance, as many stakeholders are parents who may need ample notice to make childcare arrangements or request time off from their employers.

Virtual SAC Meetings

According to the Attorney General’s Office, the authorization in [s. 120.54\(5\)\(b\)2., F.S.](#), meetings conducted entirely through the use of communications media technology are only permitted for state agencies. A quorum of any other public board must be physically present at a meeting (e.g., school advisory councils, school boards, etc.). However, 2021 changes to [s. 1001.43\(10\), F.S.](#), authorize districts to adopt procedures for phone/video attendance at “special committees”. It is unknown whether special committees include SAC meetings and what policies a district has adopted. Therefore, SAC meetings should not be held virtually unless authorized by district counsel.

SAC meetings can be made available to virtual attendees in order to increase participation and involvement, but SAC members attending virtually may not be counted toward quorum. However, if a quorum of a local board is physically present, “the participation of an absent member by telephone conference or other interactive electronic technology is permissible when such absence is due to extraordinary circumstances such as illness...whether the absence of a member due to a scheduling conflict constitutes such a circumstance is a determination that must be made in the good judgment of the board” ([AGO 03-41](#)).

Scheduling Requirements

SAC meetings are to be scheduled when parents, students, teachers, businesspersons and members of the community are able to attend. Location and time of day are important considerations for promoting attendance and participation. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)3., F.S.](#)

Number of Meetings

Statute does not establish a number of times SAC meetings are to be held. Given the SAC's responsibilities to assist in the development and approval of the SIP, school annual budget and evaluation of the SIP, it is important that meetings occur often enough to fulfill those duties.

Quorum

The majority of the membership of the council (more than half) constitutes a quorum. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)1., F.S.](#)

Meeting Minutes

SAC meetings are required to take official minutes and make those minutes available to the public promptly. Minutes should include the name of the school, a list of those in attendance, the date and location of the meeting, an official call to order, old and new business, the date and location of the next meeting (if known), and the time the meeting adjourned. Any action items voted on by the SAC should also be reflected in the minutes. A sample SAC Meeting Minutes Template is provided by BSI on the FloridaCIMS website at <https://www.floridacims.org/downloads?category=sac>.

Bylaws

Each School Advisory Council adopts its own bylaws. The district may require procedures, policies, sample by-laws or a uniform template for all SACs in their district. For further information, see [s. 1001.452\(1\)\(d\), F.S.](#), or contact your SAC liaison.