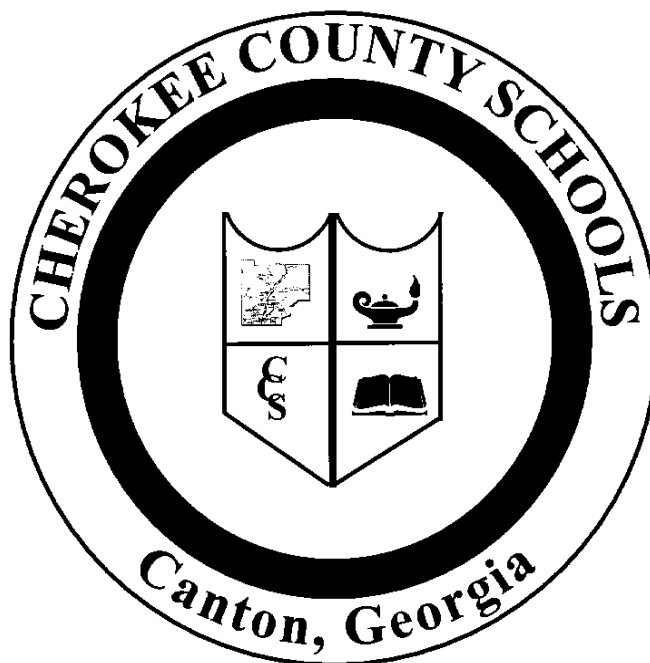


**HANDBOOK
FOR
SCHOOL COUNCILS
BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES**



Cherokee County School System

110 Academy Street
P.O. Box 769
Canton, Georgia 30114
770- 479-1871 - Fax 770-479-7758
www.cherokee.k12.ga.us

June 22, 2007

TO: School Council Members

FROM: Dr. Frank R. Petruzielo
Superintendent of School

SUBJECT: **CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOLS HANDBOOK
FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS: BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES**

One of the Major System Priorities of the Cherokee County School System is to increase the level of parent and community involvement in the total school program. In that regard and in light of recent legislation, this document is created to assist schools with the implementation of school councils and to provide a strategy for increasing parental support. It could not have been completed without the combined efforts of many dedicated Cherokee County Public School professional and support staff members.

The Cherokee County School System gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our legislative representatives who supported the Cherokee County School District, the first to recommend significant changes in the law governing school councils. These changes validate the importance of community and parent involvement in the school improvement and student achievement process. We also appreciate our school principals in this regard, who have excelled in promoting their school councils with effective and meaningful leadership.



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SCHOOL COUNCIL

CODE OF ETHICS

School Council members shall follow Georgia's Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics for Educators, as modified. A copy of the code of ethics, as modified, is provided below.

THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Introduction

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards which represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession, and defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction.

Definitions

"Educator" is a teacher, school or Cherokee County School System administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, "educator" also refers to school council members, paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.

"Student" is any individual enrolled in the state's public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual age 18 or under.

Standards

Standard 1: Criminal Acts - An educator should abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes the commission or conviction of a felony or misdemeanor offense, including DUI/BUI, but excluding minor traffic violations such as speeding, following too closely, improper lane change, etc. As used herein, "conviction" includes a finding or verdict of guilt, a plea of guilty, or a plea of *nolo contendere*.

Standard 2: Abuse of Students - An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: committing any act of child abuse, including physical and emotional abuse;

committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment; committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act; committing any act of sexual harassment; soliciting, encouraging, or consummating a romantic or inappropriate relationship with a student (including dating a student) whether written, verbal, or physical; and furnishing alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs - An educator should refrain from the abuse of alcohol or drugs during the course of service on the school council. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming alcohol.

Standard 4: Misrepresentation or Falsification - An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional service on the school council. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting professional qualifications, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information regarding compliance reports submitted to federal, state, and other governmental agencies; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting reasons for absences or leaves; and falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation.

Standard 5: Public Funds and Property - An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: misusing public or school-related funds or property; failing to account for funds collected from students or parents; and submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay.

Standard 6: Improper Remunerative Conduct - An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Standard 7: Confidential Information - An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student records, unless disclosure is required or permitted by law. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to unauthorized sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, personal confidences, health and

medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results.

Standard 8: Abandonment of Council Responsibilities - An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations of service as a member of the school council. Unethical conduct includes failure of a council member to meet the requirements of accountability. See *Article XIII, Accountability*.

Standard 9: Professional Conduct - An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards. Unethical conduct is any conduct that seriously impairs the council member's ability to function in his or her school council position or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students (inappropriate language, physical altercations, etc.).

Reporting

School Council members are required to report to the school council a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics by members of the school council.

Disciplinary Action

The local school council is empowered to remove school council members. Specifically, see: Article IV, School Council Membership.

School Council Bylaws and Guidelines

HB 1187, SECTION 10. ARTICLE 4A. O.C.G.A. 20-2-85, *et seq.*

Article I

Name

The name of this school council shall be the _____
(School Name) School Council hereinafter referred to as the school council organized under the authority of State law and the Cherokee County Board of Education. For school councils operating under these guidelines, this document supercedes the Cherokee County Public Schools Accountability Policy guidelines for school councils.

Article II

Preamble and Purpose

Recognizing the need to improve communication and participation of parents and the community in the management and operation of local schools, the General Assembly of Georgia and the Cherokee County Board of Education believe that parent and community support is critical to the success of students and schools. The intent of these bylaws and guidelines is 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.

The establishment of school councils is intended to help local boards of education develop and nurture participation, bring parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators to create a better understanding of and mutual respect for each other's concerns, and share ideas for school improvement. School councils shall be reflective of the school community.

The management and control of the Cherokee County Public Schools shall be the responsibility of the Cherokee County Board of Education, and the school leader shall be the principal, who is under the general supervision of the Superintendent of Schools. School councils shall provide advice, recommendations, and assistance and represent the community of parents and businesses. Each member of the school council, as a community representative, shall be accorded the respect and attention deserving of such election.

Article III

Training

The Georgia Department of Education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and to assist school council members in the performance of their duties. Such program shall address:

- (1) the organization of councils;
- (2) their purpose and responsibilities;

- (3) applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures;
- (4) important State and local Cherokee County School System program requirements; and
- (5) shall provide a model school council organization plan.

Additional training programs shall be offered to school council members annually.

Article IV

School Council Membership

Any member may withdraw from the school council by delivering to the school council a written resignation and submitting a copy to the secretary of the school council or school principal. Should school council members determine that a member of the school council is no longer active in the school council, as defined by the bylaws of the school council, the school council may, by a majority vote of the school council, withdraw such person's membership status, effective as of a date determined by the school council.

School Council Bylaws Defining Active Status

Members of the school council shall serve for a term of two years. The terms of the council members shall be staggered.*

Upon the expiration of the terms of the two businessmember council members in office on July 1, 2007, those member positions shall subsequently be filled by parent council members; provided, however, that additional businesspersons may serve on the council if provided for in the council's bylaws in accordance with paragraph (4) of Article IV of this section. Council members may serve more than one term.

A minimum of seven school council members, of whom a majority shall constitute a quorum, shall manage the property and business of the school council. The number of the council members shall be specified in the bylaws. Members of the school council shall include:

- (1) A number of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students, so that such parents or guardians make up a majority of the council and at least two of whom shall be businesspersons. Parent school council members shall be elected by, and from among the group they represent. Parents or guardians of any grade-level child enrolled in the school are eligible to vote and hold office, regardless of whether or not their child may graduate from the school in one year or less. A parent of a child assigned to the Crossroads Middle School/High School does qualify for election as a parent in the home school where their child would attend.

- (2) At least two certificated teachers, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions, who are employed at least four of the six school segments at the school. Teachers who have resigned but are currently employed are not eligible to vote or be elected as a teacher representative.
- (3) The school principal, and
- (4) Other members as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school related organizations. Other businesspersons from the local business community may serve on the council and shall be selected by the other members of the school council.

Article V

Vacancy on School Council

The office of school council member shall be automatically vacated:

- (1) If a member resigns;
- (2) If the person holding the office is removed as a member by an action of the council; or
- (3) If a member no longer meets the qualifications specified by law.

An election within the electing 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 the vacancy shall remain unfilled.

Article VI

Meeting Notice and Location

All meetings of the school council shall be held open to the public. The school council shall meet a minimum of four times annually, at the call of the chairperson, or at the request of a majority of the members of the school council. Notice by mail shall be sent to school council members at least seven days prior to a meeting of the school council. School councils shall be subject to Chapter 14 of Title 50, relating to open and public meetings, in the same manner as local boards of education. There can be no meetings of school councils without the required notice.

School councils may meet during normal school hours and/or before or after school hours. School councils may notify the media of all dates, times and locations of council meetings for the entire school year, July 01 through June 30, with additional notice to media for cancellations, date/time/location changes and called meetings. Because the law requires notice by mail to be sent to school council members at least seven days prior to a meeting of the council, there can be no emergency meetings of the council.

The council member serving as secretary shall be responsible for notifying, in writing, the *Cherokee Tribune* of any and all meetings of the council at least twenty-four hours in advance of the meeting. It

is the responsibility of the school council member serving as secretary to maintain a written record of compliance with public notification requirements. Additionally, the school council member serving as secretary shall provide advance notification, in writing, to the school community of teachers and parents of any and all school council meetings. (See: Article XII, Officers and Duties)

Article VII

Quorum and Voting Requirement

Each member of the school council is authorized to exercise one vote. Proxy votes are not allowed. Voting members must be present to vote.

A quorum comprised of a majority must be present in order to conduct official school council business.

At all meetings of the school council, except as provided herein, every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.

The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires majority vote.

Article VIII

Remuneration

Members of the school council shall not receive remuneration to serve on the school council or its committees.

Article IX

Electing Bodies, Election Method, Ballots And

Posting of Elections and Meetings

After providing public notice at least two weeks before the meeting of each electing body, the principal of each school shall call a meeting of electing bodies during the month of May or September each year for the purpose of selecting members of the school council.

The electing body for the parent members shall consist of all parents and guardians eligible to serve as a parent member of the school council.

The electing body for the teacher members shall consist of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as a teacher member of the school council.

Election method/procedures for teacher and parent members shall be: Nominations shall be accepted by the principal from members within the electing body prior to the actual voting meeting. One vote shall be taken with the two highest vote recipients being elected to serve on the school council. If only one position on the school council is open, then subsequent votes are required until one single individual emerges with the highest vote. Teachers/Parents must be present and qualified to vote. A person does not have to be present at the time of the vote to be elected to the school council.

Election method/procedures for other members shall be:

The Principal or designee shall recruit eligible students, staff and representatives of school related organizations who will be selected as school council members by majority vote by school council members.

Election Ballots: It shall be the responsibility of the Assistant Superintendent for Educational Programs, Student Support, and Professional Development to provide voting ballots to each school principal to be used in the election of parent and teacher representatives to the school council. All voted ballots shall be retained by the school principal at the school for safekeeping following school council elections.

Article X

Local School Council Bylaws

The school council hereby adopts all bylaws and guidelines included herein and such additional bylaws and guidelines as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the school council. The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires majority vote. The bylaws adopted by local school councils shall not be inconsistent with the language or intent of the *Cherokee County School System Handbook For School Councils: Bylaws and Guidelines* adopted May 2000, and, thereafter, as revised.

Article XI

Immunity

The school council shall have the same immunity as the Cherokee County Board of Education in all matters directly related to the functions of the school council.

Article XII

Officers and Duties

The officers of the school council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the school council, other than the chairperson, shall be elected by the school council at the first meeting of the school council following the election of school council members; provided, however, that the chairperson shall be a parent member. The officers of the school council shall hold office concurrently with the term of membership for the school council.

The Chairperson

The chairperson of the school council is a parent member. The school principal 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; setting the meeting agenda, meeting time, and location; and notifying all school council members of the same;

- (2) At his/her discretion and as appropriate, speak for and represent the school council in all school council matters before the Superintendent of Schools and the Cherokee County Board of Education;
- (3) Communicate all school council requests for information and assistance to the Superintendent of Schools and inform the school council of responses or actions of the Superintendent of Schools;
- (4) Develop the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and school operations plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval;
- (5) Develop the agenda for each meeting of the school council after taking into consideration suggestions of council members and the urgency of school matters. An item may be added to the agenda at the request of three or more school council members.

The Vice-Chairperson

The vice chairperson shall, in the absence or disability of the chairperson, preside and conduct the meeting.

The Secretary

The school council member serving as secretary shall attend all meetings, act as clerk of the school council, and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose. The school council member serving as secretary shall give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the school council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the school council.

Article XIII

Accountability

The members of the school council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:

- (1) Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues; and
- (2) Regularly participate in council meetings; and
- (3) Participate in information and training programs; and
- (4) Act as a link between the school council and the community; and
- (5) Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
- (6) Work to improve student achievement and performance.

Article XIV

Minutes

The minutes of the school council shall be made available to the public for inspection at the school office within two working days (Monday-Friday), and shall be provided to the school council members, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes within 20 days following each school council meeting.

A copy of school council meeting minutes shall be forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent for School Operations and the Superintendent of Schools within three working days (Monday-Friday).

School councils shall be subject to Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50, relating to the inspection of public records, in the same manner as local boards of education.

At all meetings of the school council, every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.

Article XV

Term of Office

The term of office of all school council members shall begin on July 01 and end on June 30 or begin on October 1 and end on September 30 (depending upon whether the election is in May or September). Members of the school council shall serve for a term of two years, except as modified herein.* (see Article IV, P.8)

Article XVI

Committees, Study Groups and Task Forces

The school 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. Such requests shall be facilitated by the office of the Superintendent of Schools to insure that all employees' statutorily-required responsibilities and work, implementation of school board policies, and school district resources are not unduly interrupted or abridged in compliance with such requests.

Article XVII

Board of Education and School Council

Operational Agreements

The local board of education shall provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including school site and expenditure budget information and site average class sizes by grade, to the school council as requested or as required by state law or state board rule. The local board shall also designate an employee of the Cherokee County School System to attend school council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to questions the school council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board. Such requests shall be facilitated by the office of the Superintendent of Schools to insure that all employees' statutorily-required responsibilities and work, implementation of school board policies, and school district resources are not unduly interrupted or abridged in compliance with such requests. The central administration shall be responsive to requests for information from a school council.

The Cherokee County Board of Education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including an annual report, such as the School Improvement Plan (SIP), as follows:

- (1) Public notice shall be given to the public of the local board's intent to consider school council reports or, recommendations;
- (2) Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to such local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a school council report, such as the school improvement plan. Such requests shall be processed in the same manner as Agenda Preparation Group items.
- (3) The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or recommendation.

The local board of education shall respond to recommendations of the school council within 60 calendar days after the request appears on the printed agenda for a regular board meeting.

Article XVIII

Scope of Council Responsibilities

- (A) School councils are advisory bodies.
- (B) School Councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education on any matter, including but not limited to, the following:
 - (1) School board policies;
 - (2) School improvement plans;
 - (3) Curriculum and assessment;
 - (4) Report cards issued or audits of the school as conducted by the State of Georgia Office of Education Accountability;
 - (5) Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the council to describe the academic performance, academic progress, services, awards, interventions, environment, and other such data as the council deems appropriate;
 - (6) School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans;
 - (7) School-community communication strategies;
 - (8) Methods of involving parents and the community;
 - (9) Extracurricular activities in the school;

- (10) School-based and community services;
 - (11) Community use of school facilities;
 - (12) Student discipline and attendance;
 - (13) Reports from the school principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, including progress within specific grade levels and subject areas and by school personnel;
and
 - (14) The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students.
- (C) The role of the school council in the principal selection process shall be reflected in the Board accountability policy.

Article XIX

Parliamentary Authority

While Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall be the governing parliamentary authority for school councils, utilizing and achieving consensus is encouraged.