KASC
LEADING THE WAY TO STUDENT SUCCESS

(FAQ)

ANSWERS ON: SBDM

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL'S NUMBER ONE JOB?

Improving teaching and learning and thus student achievement in the school.

IF A COUNCIL MEMBER HAS NOT BEEN TRAINED CAN HE/SHE PARTICIPATE IN COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS?

Yes. Any elected council member can participate in council discussions and decisions. However, the law does require that members get their training within certain time limits and if this requirement is not met, the Chair should explain to the person they cannot serve if not trained.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A POLICY AND ARE TWO READINGS REQUIRED BEFORE ADOPTING A POLICY?

A policy is a written document listing a set of rules, guidelines, or procedures for handling a certain kind of issue at your school. Kentucky law requires school councils to set policy on a number of important issues including curriculum, discipline, and instruction. State law does not set any rules about how many times a policy should be considered but having two readings is recommended and is considered best practice. Rules about this should be set in your council bylaws.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BYLAWS AND POLICIES?

Bylaws are the rules, guidelines, and procedures that define how the *council* operates; policies are the rules, guidelines, and procedures that define how your *school* operates.

WHAT SHOULD A COUNCIL NOT INCLUDE IN POLICY?

Councils should write policy within their areas of responsibility according to SBDM law, and avoid these pitfalls:

- Issues that involve the day-to-day running of the school
- Guidelines already set by board policy, state law, athletic conferences, etc.
- Details that are likely to change year-to-year
- Rules outlining how individual programs will be run
- Issues that should be administrative decisions
- Unwieldy requirements or monitoring activities (for teachers as well as for the principal)

CAN THE COUNCIL DECIDE HOW INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS WILL BE DISCIPLINED, ASSIGNED TO CLASSES, OR WHAT INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS WILL TEACH, OR ASSIGNED SPACE?

No. These are all areas of principal responsibility. The council sets policy for the school and may include criteria for consideration but should never be involved with discussion or decision-making about individuals.

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WHO DECIDES A COUNCIL'S STAFF FUNDING?

District officials do, using a policy set by your board. Each council must be notified of a tentative allocation by March 1, and an updated allocation by May 1.

WHO DECIDES WHAT STAFF POSITIONS A SCHOOL WILL HAVE?

The council does, within the funding allocated to the school.

IF A COUNCIL CUTS POSITIONS, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE PEOPLE IN THOSE POSITIONS?

The Superintendent works that out district-wide, often moving staff to other buildings to meet shifting needs.

CAN THE COUNCIL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHO LEAVES THE SCHOOL?

No. The council only decides the number of positions in each job classification. Any discussion of the individuals in those positions is inappropriate.

HOW ARE NEW STAFF MEMBERS CHOSEN?

The principal follows the council's consultation policy. After consultation with the council, the principal selects the person to be hired. (Please see our FAQ on Hiring for a more complete answer.)

HOW IS THE AGENDA SET FOR REGULAR MEETINGS?

The chairperson (usually the principal) sets a preliminary agenda. At the beginning of the council meeting, the agenda may be amended before it is approved by the council. This also applies to meetings of council committees.

IS CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING REQUIRED?

No. State law does not set any rules about how councils make their decisions, but consensus is the recommended decision-making method and is considered a best practice. If a council chooses to use consensus, guidelines should be set in the council bylaws, with a provision for what the council will do in case consensus cannot be reached.

IF A COUNCIL GOES INTO CLOSED SESSION, CAN ONLY COUNCIL MEMBERS BE IN ATTENDANCE?

Only council members, and people who have been officially invited, can be in attendance during a closed session.

SHOULD MINUTES BE TAKEN DURING A CLOSED SESSION?

No. Since no decisions can be made during a closed session (councils must come back into open session and make decisions), no minutes need to be taken.

HOW DETAILED DO MINUTES NEED TO BE?

Minutes must include the name of the group, date of the meeting, names of the members present, and any decisions made. Usually the beginning and ending times, summaries of any major points made, names of people who presented reports, and a follow-up summary of who agreed to do what by when are also included. Point-by-point accounts of discussions should be avoided.

HOW SOON AFTER A COUNCIL MEETING SHOULD THE MINUTES BE DISTRIBUTED?

As soon as possible (usually within a week) a draft of the minutes should be distributed. They will become official once approved at the next meeting.

HOW IS A SPECIAL MEETING CALLED?

If you need to meet between regular meetings, or you must cancel a meeting and handle that business a few days later, or if business comes up that can't wait until the next date on your schedule, the chairperson or a majority of members can call a special meeting.

Whoever calls the meeting must:

- List the date, time, place, and agenda for the meeting in a written notice.
- Make sure the written notice is mailed, faxed, emailed*, or hand-delivered to all members. Post a copy of the notice in a conspicuous place at the school. If the meeting will be held somewhere else, the notice must also be posted there.
- Fax, mail, emailed*, or hand-deliver the notice to any media that have filed written requests.

  * To receive e-mail notification, a written request must be on file at the school.

HOW IS THE AGENDA SET FOR SPECIAL MEETINGS?

The agenda for a special meeting must be included in the written notice used to call the meeting. The council (or committee) cannot add to what is on the agenda for a special meeting.