



## Georgia School Council Law

### **O.C.G.A. 20-2-85 – Establishment of school councils**

- (a) The General Assembly recognizes the need to improve communication and participation of parents and the community in the management and operation of local schools. The General Assembly believes that parent and community support is critical to the success of students and schools. The intent of this article 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.
- (b) The management and control of public schools shall be the responsibility of local boards of education, and the school leader shall be the principal. School councils shall provide advice, recommendations, and assistance and represent the community of parents and businesses. Each member of the council, as a community representative, shall be accorded the respect and attention deserving of such election.

### **O.C.G.A. 20-2-86 – Requirements of school councils**

- (a) By October 1, 2001, each local board of education that elects to participate in the Quality Basic Education Program provided for in Article 6 of this chapter shall have a school council operational at a minimum of one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school, except that if a school system does not have its schools organized in this manner the system shall designate schools for a school council as closely to the intent of this Code section as possible. By October 1, 2002, each local board of education shall have a school council operational in a minimum of 50 percent of the schools under its jurisdiction. Such school council shall operate pursuant to this Code section, and the local board of education shall assist all councils in their creation and operation. After two years of successful operation, and upon receiving a high performance designation by the Office of Student Achievement, the local board of education shall devolve to the school council such additional authority in matters of school operation as the local board deems appropriate. By October 1, 2003, each local board of education shall have a school council operational in each of the schools under its jurisdiction. Local boards of education may by board policy allow an alternative to a school council at a charter school, an alternative school, or a psychoeducation center if another governance body or advisory council exists that performs a comparable function.
- (b) The local board of education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and to assist school councilmembers in the performance of their duties. Such program shall address the organization of councils, their purpose and responsibilities, applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures, and important state and local school system program requirements and shall provide a model school council organization plan. Additional training programs shall be offered to school councilmembers annually. The State Board of Education shall develop and make available a model school council training program.
- (c) Membership on the council shall be open to teachers, parents, and business representatives selected from all businesses that are designated school business partners. Any member may withdraw from the council by delivering to the council a written resignation and submitting a copy to the secretary of the council or school principal. Should school councilmembers determine that a member of the council is no longer active in the council as defined by the

bylaws of the council, the council may, by a majority vote, withdraw such person's membership status, effective as of a date determined by the council.

- (d) The property and business of the council shall be managed by a minimum of seven school councilmembers of whom a majority shall constitute a quorum. The number of councilmembers shall be specified in the council's bylaws. If the number of councilmembers exceeds seven, the number of parent members and teacher members must be equal. Members of the school council shall include:

- (1) At least two parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students;
- (2) Two businesspersons;
- (3) 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;
- (4) The school principal; and
- (5) Other members as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school-related organizations. Selection procedures for these members and the business members shall be specified in the council's bylaws.

An employee of the local school system may serve as a parent representative on the council of a school in which his or her child is enrolled if such employee works at a different school. With the exception of the principal and the business representatives, members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

- (e) Members of the council shall serve for a term of two years or for such other term as may be specified in the council's bylaws, except as provided in this subsection. Upon the expiration of the terms of the councilmembers in office on July 1, 2004, the subsequent terms of the councilmembers shall be staggered. In order to stagger the terms, the initial terms of one-half of the councilmembers pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection (d) of this Code section, one-half of the councilmembers pursuant to paragraph (2) of subsection (d) of this Code section, one-half of the councilmembers pursuant to paragraph (3) of subsection (d) of this Code section, and one-half of the councilmembers pursuant to paragraph (5) of subsection (d) of this Code section shall have initial terms of one year and the remaining members shall have initial terms of two years. Councilmembers may serve more than one term. The office of school councilmember shall be automatically vacated:

- (1) If a member shall resign;
- (2) If the person holding the office is removed as a member by an action of the council pursuant to this Code section; or
- (3) If a member no longer meets the qualifications specified in this Code section.

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 days or less remaining in the term in which case the vacancy shall remain unfilled.

- (f) All meetings of the school council shall be open to the public. The council shall meet at least four times annually and the number of meetings shall be specified in the council's bylaws. The council shall also meet at the call of the chairperson, or at the request of a majority of the members of the council. Notice by mail shall be sent to school councilmembers at least seven days prior to a meeting of the council and shall include the date, time, and location of the meeting. 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. Each member is authorized to exercise one vote. A quorum must be present in order to conduct official council business. Members of the council shall not receive remuneration to serve on the council or its committees.
- (g) 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 for the purpose of selecting members of the school council as required by this Code section. 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, and the electing body for the teacher members shall consist of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as a teacher member of the school council. The

school council shall specify in its bylaws the month in which elections are to be held and shall specify a nomination and election process.

- (h) The school council shall adopt such bylaws as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the council. The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires a two-thirds affirmative vote. The State Board of Education shall develop and make available model school council bylaws.
- (i) The school council shall have the same immunity as the local board of education in all matters directly related to the functions of the council.
- (j)
  - (1) The officers of the school council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the council shall be elected by the council at the first meeting of the council following the election of school councilmembers. The officers of the council shall hold office for the term specified in the council's bylaws.
  - (2) The vice chairperson shall, in the absence or disability of the chairperson, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson and shall perform such other duties as shall be required by the council.
  - (3) The secretary shall attend all meetings, act as clerk of the council, and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose. The secretary shall give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the council.
- (k) The members of the school council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:
  - (1) Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
  - (2) Regularly participate in council meetings;
  - (3) Participate in information and training programs;
  - (4) Act as a link between the school council and the community;
  - (5) Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
  - (6) Work to improve student achievement and performance.
- (l) The minutes of the council shall be made available to the public, for inspection at the school office, and shall be provided to the councilmembers, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes within 20 days following each council meeting. All 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.
- (m) At all meetings of the council every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.
- (n) The term of office of all councilmembers shall begin and end on the dates specified in the council's bylaws.
- (o) The 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.
- (p) The local board of education shall provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including school site budget and expenditure information and site average class sizes by grade, to the council as requested or as required by state law or state board rule. The local board shall also designate an employee of the school system to attend council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to questions the council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board. The central administration shall be responsive to requests for information from a school council.
- (q) The local board of education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, as follows:
  - (1) Public notice shall be given to the community 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 a local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a council report or recommendation; and

- (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 days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

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- (r) The school principal shall have the following duties pertaining to school council activities:
  - (1) Cause to be created a school council pursuant to this Code section by convening the appropriate bodies to select school councilmembers; setting the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notifying all school councilmembers of the same;
  - (2) Perform all of the duties required by law and the bylaws of the council;
  - (3) Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the local school superintendent and inform the council of responses or actions of the local school superintendent;
  - (4) Develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval; and
  - (5) Aid in the development of the agenda for each meeting of the council after taking into consideration suggestions of councilmembers and the urgency of school matters. An item may be added to the agenda at the request of three or more councilmembers.
- (s) School councils are advisory bodies. The councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education and local school superintendent on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (1) School board policies;
  - (2) School improvement plans;
  - (3) Curriculum and assessments;
  - (4) Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement;
  - (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.
- (t) The role of the school council in the principal selection process shall be determined in policy written by the local board of education.