



Superintendent's Circular

School Year 2011-2012

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SCHOOL PARENT COUNCILS AND SCHOOL SITE COUNCILS: ELECTIONS AND PROCEDURES

Engaging families and teachers as partners in the decision-making process and educational lives of their children is a priority in the Boston Public Schools. Family engagement and shared leadership are elements of the Seven Essentials for Whole School Improvement that, when effectively implemented, create an environment rich in positive relationships and supportive of powerful home-school partnerships. Furthermore, deepening partnerships with families has been identified as a key strategy for improving student learning in the Superintendent's Acceleration Agenda. One important way that parents can have meaningful involvement in their child's school is through serving in a parent leadership role on the School Parent Council Executive Committee or the School Site Council. For the purposes of this memo, "parent" refers to any adult who is recognized as the legal guardian of a child attending the school.

SCHOOL PARENT COUNCILS (SPC)

Role

The role of the School Parent Council is to provide a vehicle for families to express concerns, gather information and give feedback on various school matters, and to work with school staff to coordinate family outreach activities. All parents or legal guardians of a child enrolled at a particular school are automatically members of that school's SPC.

Purpose

Effective School Parent Councils contribute to a supportive school learning community where school staff and families partner to support the educational development of children. Representing the SPC is a parent governance body in which the members are elected through a democratic voting process and reflect the diverse racial, ethnic, educational and socioeconomic background of the school's student population. The SPC also works with school staff to coordinate activities designed to increase family engagement. **Every Boston Public School must elect an Executive Committee for that SPC and take steps to ensure that it is an active and diverse council representative of all families within the school.**

Election Procedures and Documentation

Schools should report their election date to the BPS Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE) by **September 1, 2011**. Additionally, schools should identify an election facilitator from within the school community within the first week of the 2011-12 school year, and communicate this information to OFSE. OFSE will provide training for election facilitators. For schools that are not able to identify an election facilitator from within the school community, OFSE can provide one, as internal capacity allows.

Principals/Headmasters must obtain building permit applications requesting that the building remain open from 5:30-8:30 p.m. on the night of the election.

Elections must be completed by **October 15, 2011** and all election documents returned to OFSE by **October 31, 2011**. Required documents include: **Facilitator's checklist with notes, sign-in sheets, elected member information forms and a completed SPC/SSC roster.**

► Schools must schedule a meeting for parents for the purposes of:

1. Election of the SPC Executive Committee and School Site Council members.
2. Presentation on the structure and function of SPC.
3. Principal/Headmaster presentation on the school's 2011-2012 academic goals.

► The following is a suggested list of topics that can be covered during the Principal/Headmaster presentation:

- Summary of the goals of the school's Whole School Improvement Plan
- Strategy/Plans for partnering with families to support children's learning and development
- Major school development projects in which families should be involved including, but not limited to, school-based management, budget planning, etc.
- Code of Conduct – Standards of Behavior
- Promotion Policy/Implementation
- Testing programs and schedule
- Curriculum development
- Homework Policy
- Home-School Compact
- Other special services and programs offered during the year

► In making every attempt to inform all families in the school community about the SPC elections, schools must use these multiple modes of communication. Strategies to reach families include:

- Mailings or distribution of flyers to families, translated in home languages, must be given to parents two weeks in advance of election
- A flyer should be posted in the main office and in family centers, where they exist
- A Connect-Ed phone call reminding families of the date of election
- Email to all families with emails on file

SPC Governance

On the day of the election, a trained facilitator will assist all families in attendance in electing the SPC Executive Committee, which consists of the following officers:

- **Co-Chairs** (2) shall set the agenda and facilitate all SPC meetings.
- **Secretary** shall record the minutes of all meetings, ensure that these minutes are made available to all families and staff in the school and maintain copies in the school office.
- **Treasurer** shall keep clear and accurate financial records of all transactions of the SPC.

School Site Council Parent Representatives are elected according to the School Site Council Bylaws. SSC representatives shall attend all SSC meetings and serve as Representatives of the School Parent Council. Regular communication with the SPC will be important to ensure that the concerns of families at the school are represented during School Site Council meetings. The SSC Representatives are also responsible for ensuring that all decisions made at the SSC meetings are transmitted back to the larger SPC body.

At the time of SPC election, the group shall also elect a Citywide Parent Council (CPC) Representative, a Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPED-PAC) representative, and for schools receiving Title 1 funds, a Boston Parent Advisory Council (BPAC)/Title I Representative. The Citywide Parent Council is the district level body engages parents in addressing and responding to district level issues and policies. The CPC Annual Meeting will be held in November to elect its Board of Directors, which is equivalent to the SPC Executive Committee.

SPC Bylaws

All School Parent Councils must develop **by-laws** for their council to provide structure and guidance for their operations. The SPC by-laws should be submitted to OFSE upon approval by the School Parent Council. Sample by-laws can be obtained from OFSE.

Guidelines for Administrators

- The Administrator (which might be the Principal/Headmaster or Parent Coordinator in the case of schools that have one) will assist the SPC in notifying families of all SPC and/or Executive Committee meetings, by providing access to a computer, paper, copying machine and postage, and by working with the SPC for timely dissemination of notices for the entire SPC. Connect Ed calls have become an effective method of communicating upcoming meeting announcements.
 - The Administrator will make him- or herself available to the SPC Co-Chairs for on-going communication regarding family and student engagement practices, student learning and school improvement.
 - Principals/Headmasters will work with ELL teachers and central staff to have information translated into the languages represented at their school and must ensure that arrangements for translations have been negotiated and agreed upon by the SPC and school staff (this includes election night).
 - SPC's have the right to raise money for diverse functions within the school. All fundraising activities must be cleared in advance with the school Administrator to ensure proper coordination. The accountability of funds and an acceptable allocation of fundraising activities must be established by the SPC as part of the public record included in the by-laws. The council may establish separate accounts. All funds raised must be spent in accordance with city statutes and Superintendent's Circulars: *School Funds* and *Proceeds from School Activities (FIN 4 & 5)*.
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SCHOOL SITE COUNCILS (SSC)

Role

The role of the School Site Council is to serve as the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared decision making model.

Purpose

The purpose of the School Site Council is to engage parents and teachers with the Principal/Headmaster in the decision making process at the school level. School Site Councils are required by the Education Reform Act of 1993 and the collective bargaining agreement between the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the Boston School Committee. All schools must have a School Site Council or, in pilot schools, a Governing Board. It is of critical importance that the two bodies, SPC and SSC, work together in a collaborative way and share information for discussion and decision-making purposes.

Under the school-based management/shared decision-making model described in the BTU contract, the role of the SSC is to:

1. Review and approve the Whole School Improvement Plan within guidelines established by the Superintendent.
2. Approve the budget for discretionary school materials, supplies, textbooks and equipment, including the use of school improvement award funds.
3. Develop and approve plans for increasing parent involvement in the school
4. Approve waivers.
5. Review and approve recommendations of the Instructional Leadership Team that have been endorsed by the Principal/Headmaster and that will have a major effect on the school community
6. Review and approve recommendations from any other committee or group that is established to recommend changes that will have a major effect on the school community.

- Continually evaluate the resources and services provided by all outside programs or outside professionals that come into the school.

In addition, the role of the Personnel Subcommittee of the School Site Council is to:

- Approve the hiring of new BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff and in-transfer of BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system.
- Approve the selection of Lead Teachers, New Teacher Developers, and new athletic coaches; and.
- Determine the schedule and procedures for reviewing candidates for positions. The Personnel Subcommittee membership is the Principal/Headmaster, two teachers and one parent and decisions are made by a majority vote.

Composition

The School Site Council shall be composed of the Principal/Headmaster, elected members of the BTU who work more than 50% of their work week at that school, parents of children enrolled in that school, and, in high schools, one student.

Teachers must be elected using a secret ballot "from the pool of BTU bargaining unit members" at the school. The election is to be run by the BTU Building Representatives and the number of bargaining unit members is based on enrollment figures as of October 1 of the year of the election (see Table 1). Schools with less than 30 bargaining unit members shall elect 4 members; those with at least 31 but not more than 60 shall elect 5 members; schools with 61 or more shall elect 6 members. BTU representatives shall bring the voice of its membership to the School Site Council.

# of BTU members in school	# of BTU SSC Reps
30 or fewer BTU	4
31 – 60 BTU	5
61 or more BTU	6

The number of parents elected shall equal the number of BTU members on the School Site Council, plus the Principal/Headmaster (See Table 2). Parent representatives must be elected by the School Parent Council and shall serve as liaisons to the School Parent Council, ensuring that parent voice from the full school community is heard. Each school shall also elect alternate parent and teacher members to substitute for absent members of their group. Alternate members will also fill vacancies created by the resignation or removal of a Council member. Additionally, Alternates cast a vote for their respective group, when a quorum is needed.

# of BTU members + 1 (P/HM) on SSC	# of Parent SSC Reps
5	5
6	6
7	7

Councils may also include Associate, non-voting members such as community partners, representatives from other employee groups within the school or additional students at the high school level.

Goal of Diversity

In the contract agreement governing School Site Councils, the Boston Teachers Union and the Boston School Committee affirm that effective councils need the participation of all constituent groups present in the school. Therefore, it is incumbent upon parents and BTU members to elect individuals who are representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of their constituents. To promote diversity in school governance, the following racial groups are recognized in the election and composition of the School Site Councils: African American/Black, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic and White.

Additionally, in the election for School Site Council members, each racial group that constitutes at least 5% of the BTU membership at a school shall have the highest vote getting candidate who is a member of that racial group seated on the council. For example: the SSC election results depicted in the table below show that the highest vote-getters for the three open seats in a school where the BTU membership is 40% African American, 40% White and 20% Hispanic were two White, one African American and one Hispanic candidate. Based on this rule, the seats would go to the White candidate with the highest number of votes, the African American candidate and the Hispanic candidate. This is done to ensure equity in representation across racial groups.

Election Procedures and Documentation

All elections shall be held by October 15, 2011. School staff must make every attempt to inform all families about the elections. Strategies to do so include Connect-ED, distribution of flyers (in all languages represented at the school) and an email to all families. Members will serve until the succeeding Council is elected. The parent members are elected by parents during the School Parent Council Executive Committee election and the BTU members and school staff are elected by their peers.

Candidate	Racial Group	# Votes
1	White	14
2	White	12
3	African Amer.	11
4	Hispanic	4

Schools must report their SPC/SSC election date to the OFSE by September 1, 2011. All parent and BTU member elections must be completed by October 15, 2011. The SPC election facilitator will submit the election results to the OFSE immediately following the elections. **Every school must complete and submit the SSC membership roster of all elected SSC and SPC members and meeting dates for 2011-12 school year to OFSE by October 31, 2011.**

Pilot Schools are required to provide Rosters of their Governance Boards to the OFSE as well. The deadline for reporting is the same as above.

All completed roster forms should be sent electronically to the OFSE email box: OFSE@boston.k12.ma.us. No faxes please.

SSC Governance

As a matter of general policy, the SSC is expected to operate as a single decision-making team, working together to reach consensus on solution educational problems confronting the school. The basis of the shared decision-making model brings together members from various groups to ensure that decisions reflect a variety of opinions and gather input from all affected groups.

The Principal/Headmaster shall serve as SSC Co-Chair and at the first meeting of the school year; the elected members of the SSC are encouraged to select one member (preferably a parent) to serve as the other Co-Chair. Other roles such as Recording Secretary and subcommittees shall also be selected at that meeting.

Each SSC is required to pass **by-laws** to govern its SSC. The by-laws must be approved or amended by two-thirds of the members of the bargaining unit in the school eligible to vote for the School Site Council and by two-thirds of the parents who come to a parent meeting. There must be at least two weeks notice for the parent meeting. The by-laws may be approved the same night that elections are held. Copies of the by-laws are to be distributed to all members at the first meeting of each newly elected council.

The **by-laws** must, at minimum, address the following questions:

- How will elections be held?
- When will meetings be held – what is the frequency?
- What are the notice procedures for announcing meetings and what is the process for agenda development?
- Who is responsible for co-chairing the Council and for recording minutes and forwarding the minutes on to the Office of Family and Student Engagement?

- What is the system for selecting alternates who have the same racial identity as the members they would be representing?
- What are the terms of office, and how will they be staggered?
- What is the policy in regards to members who fail to attend regularly?

A copy of the final SSC by-laws must be sent to OFSE. Each year, the School Site Council and School Parent Council must review and reaffirm their by-laws and when necessary, modify and approve them

Meetings

All meetings must be open to the public, and **the first meeting of the newly elected SSC shall be held no later than October 31**. At this first meeting, a calendar of meetings for the entire school year shall be established – ensuring that the times and dates are convenient for all members. Any change to this calendar must be approved by the SSC with at least one week's notice to staff and parents. The agenda for the meetings shall be developed by the Co-Chairs with input from other members of the Council and the school community at large. A **quorum** must be present to vote on issues. The SSC quorum is the number of voting members needed to make a decision and should be clearly defined in the SSC Bylaws. The Recording Secretary shall record the minutes of all meetings. The minutes must be kept on file in the main office of the school and be accessible for public review.

SSC Oversight

The Joint Boston Teachers Union-School Department Steering Committee will develop and implement policies and guidelines and generally oversee the implementation and operation of school-based management/shared decision-making. This Joint Steering Committee is composed of the Superintendent of Schools and the President of the Boston Teachers Union, who serve as co-chairs, assisted by up to five additional members each. Decisions of the Joint Steering Committee shall require the concurrence of the Superintendent and the President of the Union. This body shall endeavor to operate by consensus as a role model for school-based shared decision-making groups.

The Superintendent of Schools has designated the Office of Family and Student Engagement as the entity with oversight for the election. In conjunction with BTU, OFSE will provide training for SSC members. As such, all documentation of members elected to the Councils must be submitted to OFSE in a timely fashion in order to ensure compliance with state law and the most effective shared decision-making processes.

SSC Training, Support and Expectations

The BPS Office of Family and Student engagement in conjunction with the Boston Teachers' Union, will provide SSC training and manuals for all SSC members. Schools are encouraged to attend SSC Training in teams. Trainings are held in November, December and January. To get SSC manuals for your SSC members, call OFSE at (617) 635-7750.

SSCs are required by the MA Open Meeting Law to post and submit; meeting dates, agendas and meeting notes to OFSE within 5 school days of the SSC/Governing Board meeting.

For reporting purposes, OFSE has developed the following designations for SSCs and Pilot School governing boards based on their submissions:

- **School with No Functioning SSC**- no SSC rosters (parent/teacher reps), meeting dates, bylaws or meeting agenda/notes submitted to OFSE
- **School Reporting SSC** - roster with parent and teacher reps is submitted, no meeting dates, Bylaws or meeting agenda/notes are submitted to OFSE
- **School Fully Functioning SSC**- roster with parent and teacher reps submitted, with annual meeting dates, bylaws and monthly meeting agenda/notes are submitted to OFSE

Please see the School-Based Management and Shared Decision-Making section of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Boston School Committee and the Boston Teachers Union for more specific information regarding School Site Councils.

Summary of significant dates and deadlines:

Date	Activity
September 1, 2011	Deadline to report election date to the Office of Family & Student Engagement (OFSE)
October 15, 2011	Deadline for elections to be held
October 31, 2011	SPC and SSC Membership rosters, Elected Member Info Forms, Facilitator's Checklist, Election Sign-In Sheets, and SSC meeting calendar submitted to OFSE email: OFSE@boston.k12.ma.us
October 31, 2011	Deadline for the first SSC meeting to be held.
To Be Announced	Citywide Parent Council Annual Meeting
To Be Announced	SSC Trainings conducted by BTU and OFSE

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Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent

APPENDIX I

The Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council

The Boston Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPED PAC) is a citywide parent advisory council which is established under the special education law, Chapter 71B, of the Massachusetts General Laws. As an advisory council, its duties include advising the school committee on matters pertaining to the education and safety of students with disabilities; meeting regularly with school officials to participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of special education programs, and sharing information and resources to help all families of special education students understand their rights and options accurately and comprehensively. SPED PAC believes that informed and engaged parents can best advocate for their children to ensure that their education and social needs are met in a least restrictive environment.

In 2008, SPED PAC was reinstated with new By-Laws and a new Executive Board of elected officers and members at large. The organization holds monthly general meetings to discuss important topics and offer training sessions through our network of experienced professionals.