

## Community Relations

### School Governance Councils

#### I. Purpose

Consistent with the Board of Educations' adopted theory of action and its commitment to create and maintain a system of high-performing schools, all schools in the Norwalk Public School system will maintain school-based governance councils to guide the schools' development. The Board believes that the success of the school and the students it serves is the shared responsibility of school staff, parents or legal guardians and community members.

#### II. Definition

The School Governance Council (SGC) is the primary, local school decision-making body of a school devoted to achieve its mission and vision. Toward this end, the SGC will focus on the analysis of student achievement, development of improvement plans, allocation of resources and programmatic and operational changes which enhance the quality of the school and the achievement of its students.

#### III. Membership

School Governance Councils shall consist of 14 members plus up to three nonvoting members depending on the type of school involved. The following tables describe the category of membership, the number of members and how they are elected.

<i>Member</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Election Process</i>
Parents or guardians of students at the school who are not administrators or teachers employed by the Norwalk public schools	7	Elected by the parents or guardians of students attending the school, each household with a student attending the school will have one vote.
Teachers at the school	5	Elected by the teachers of the school.
Community leaders within the school attendance area or partner organization	2	Elected by the parent and teacher members of the Council.
School principal (nonvoting)	1	Principal

Additional members and election process in high schools:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Election Process</i>
Students, high school council members only (nonvoting)	2	Elected by the school's student body, one from each of the junior and senior classes.

All members are equal partners in decision-making and all decisions are made by consensus or a two-thirds majority vote of those voting Council members in attendance where consensus is not achieved and a vote may be required.

#### **IV. Requirements**

All members shall be required to participate in initial and annual training sessions provided by the District and to remain in good standing in the groups they represent during the term of their service on the Council, e.g. teacher representatives must be teachers in active service at the school and parent representatives must be parents of children currently attending the school. School Governance Councils shall meet monthly from September through June of each year. Absence from three consecutive meetings will result in forfeiture of Council membership.

#### **V. Election and Term of Members**

Members of the Councils shall be elected as follows:

- Parents representatives shall be elected from parents or legal guardians of children enrolled in the school. The process for parent election shall be developed by the principal in collaboration with the school's Parent-Teacher Organization or comparable parent organization, shall be based generally on the "Guidance for School Governance Councils – Membership and Election Procedures" published by the CSDE in August, 2013, and shall be subject to the approval of the Superintendent of Schools.
- Teachers shall be elected by the teachers of the school.
- Members representing one or more partner organizations external to the school shall be elected by the parent and teacher members of the Council.
- The Council shall represent the diverse interests of the families and staff that make up the local school community. Every effort, therefore, shall be made to engage broad participation in the Council election process.

Voting members have a two-year term and no one member can serve more than two terms on a council. Notwithstanding the foregoing, at the first election of the Council, half of the voting members elected, selected by random drawing, shall serve one year terms. Thereafter, all voting members shall serve two year terms. The nonvoting student members serve a one-year term, and no student member can serve more than two terms. Elections at the high schools will be conducted in the month of September following the requirements stated in the election process within this policy. The year of each term on the high school councils shall be from October 1 through September 30. Elections at all other schools will be conducted in the month of May following the requirements stated in the election process within this policy. The year of each term on said other schools' councils shall be from June 1 through May 31. Vacancies that occur during the year will be filled by the Council for the unexpired portion of a term.

#### **VI. Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **A. Parent Co-Chairperson**

A Parent Co-Chair of each School Governance Council shall be elected annually by the members. The Co-Chairs shall set meeting agendas, preside over meetings of the Council, attend bi-annual district-wide meetings of SGC Co-Chairs with the Superintendent and an annual meeting of SGC Co-Chairs with the Board of Education.

## B. Principal or School Director

The principal is the chief executive officer of the school and accountable for school quality and student achievement. The principal shall be responsible for maintaining and supporting the School Governance Council at the school. The principal shall:

1. serve as the Council Co-Chair
2. make recommendations to the Council and implement Council decisions
3. be a non-voting member of the Council
4. make tie-breaking decisions in cases where the Council cannot agree or fails to act on items 1, 2, or 6 of section C of Roles and Responsibilities

In the exceptional case where the principal is in disagreement with two-thirds of the Council regarding items 1, 2, or 6 below, the Chief of School Operations shall review both recommendations and make a final determination.

## C. Duties of Council Members

Subject to the provisions of Section F below, the Council collectively, shall establish a process and timeline for the following functions:

1. Conduct at least one meeting per year to which all parents and teachers of the school are invited, and at which the vision, mission and goals for the school shall be discussed and evaluated. The Council shall use the results of such meetings to guide it in appointment of committees, study groups and task forces, under section (D) below, to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities hereunder and carrying out projects for the improvement of the school.
2. Analyze student achievement data and school needs relative to the development and approval of the school's Accountability Plan, which shall be submitted to the Superintendent for approval each year during the month of June. The schools' degree of achievement of the goals set forth in the approved plan shall be the basis of any decisions made by the Superintendent under Section VI(F) below.
3. Develop and approve the school's annual resource allocation plan (budget) in support of the school's improvement goals.
4. In the event of a vacancy in the Principalship, notwithstanding any other Board policy, the Council shall serve as the local interview committee and shall interview a slate of qualified candidates provided by the District and recommend to the Superintendent of Schools one or more candidates from said slate for appointment as Principal.
5. In addition, the council shall assist the Principal in the selection process for teachers and the other certified positions.
6. Provide advice and assistance to the principal regarding programmatic and operational changes which foster the school's improvement goals, subject to Board policy and to contracts made by the Board. This may include major program changes, adjustment of the school's focus, hours and days of operation and the school's enrollment goals.
7. Promote the school as a parental choice relative to its enrollment goals.
8. Develop and approve a School Compact for parents or legal guardians and students outlining the criteria and responsibilities for enrollment and school membership consistent with the school's goals and academic focus.

9. Develop and approve a written parent involvement policy that outlines the role of parents and legal guardians in the school.
10. Provide advice and assistance to the principal on matters of importance to parents or legal guardians. Such advice shall be informed by an annual survey of parent satisfaction with aspects of school quality and student achievement and an annual parent forum. Such forum shall be conducted by the principal and parent representatives.
11. Inform the Board of Education relative to the school's facility needs.
12. Participate in the selection of the school's "before and after school" program.
13. Determine the need for school uniforms and any type of unique school attire to be worn by students.

#### D. Committees, Study Groups, Task Forces

The Council may appoint committees, study groups, or task forces of parents, teachers and community members for such purposes as it deems helpful/necessary in order to carry out the responsibilities of the Council enumerated in these bylaws and to promote the vision, mission and goals of the school. No such committee, study group or task force may exercise the authority of the Council.

#### E. Other Provisions

The Council may adopt Bylaws providing for selection of additional officers in addition to the Co-Chairs, and addressing such other matters as the Council desires (provided that such Bylaws shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of this Policy).

The Council shall comply with any applicable requirements of state law at schools where such Councils are mandated by such law.

The Council shall comply with Norwalk Board of Education policies, procedures and contractual agreements.

School Governance Council meetings are open to all parents of the school.

#### F. Superintendent's Power to Suspend Provisions of Policy 1211

For purposes of this subsection F, "Intervention School" means a Norwalk school which is one of the lowest performing schools in the District as measured by state and internal data and by school quality reviews, and is designated as an Intervention School by the Superintendent.

Consistent with the Board of Educations' adopted theory of action, individual schools are presumed to act autonomously to the extent provided above. Notwithstanding the foregoing, schools that are designated as Intervention Schools by the Superintendent shall be subject to a reduction in their autonomy and to intervention and support from the NPS administration. As to any school designated as an Intervention School, the Superintendent may intervene and remove from the Council, by written notice, its authority under any or all of subsections 3, 4, 5, 6, 12 and 13 of Section C hereinabove, and the Superintendent shall then designate appropriate administrative officials to exercise such authority. Subsequent to such designation, and upon verification satisfactory to the Superintendent that the school is making appropriate progress toward meeting its school improvement

goals, the Superintendent may restore authority to the Council to the extent the Superintendent deems appropriate, with full authority to be restored upon removal of the Intervention School designation.

## **VII. Reporting and Oversight**

Each School Governance Council shall report annually to the school's stakeholders on their progress in meeting the goals of the school's Accountability Plan.

The Board of Education shall conduct an annual forum with School Governance Council Co-Chairs to assess the implementation of this policy.

The Superintendent will report annually to the Board on the effectiveness of School Governance Councils as an element of the Board's Strategic Operating Plan.

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NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norwalk, Connecticut