

# A Handbook for School Site Councils\*

\*Adapted by IUSD for School Site Council

# Organizing the Schoolsite Council

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Schoolsite Council

The California Education Code<sup>7</sup> requires the schoolsite council to develop a *Single Plan for Student Achievement* for Consolidated Application programs operated at the school. The council must recommend the proposed plan to the local governing board for approval, monitor its implementation, and evaluate the results. At least annually, the council must revise and recommend the plan, including proposed expenditures of all funds allocated to the school through the Consolidated Application, to the local governing board for approval.

### School Advisory Committees

The plan must be developed with the advice, review and certification of any applicable school advisory committees. Such groups include the English Learner Advisory Committee, the State Compensatory Education Advisory Committee, the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Committee, and the School Health Council. All required advisory committees have responsibility to advise the school on the special needs of students, and on ways the school may meet those needs.

### Governing Board

The local governing board adopts policies for the development and implementation of the *Single Plan for Student Achievement*. Acting upon the recommendation of the council, the board approves or disapproves the plan and all subsequent revisions.<sup>8</sup> The plan must have board approval before expenditures proposed in the plan may be made. The board must also certify that school plans are consistent with local educational agency plans required for federal funding.

### Administration

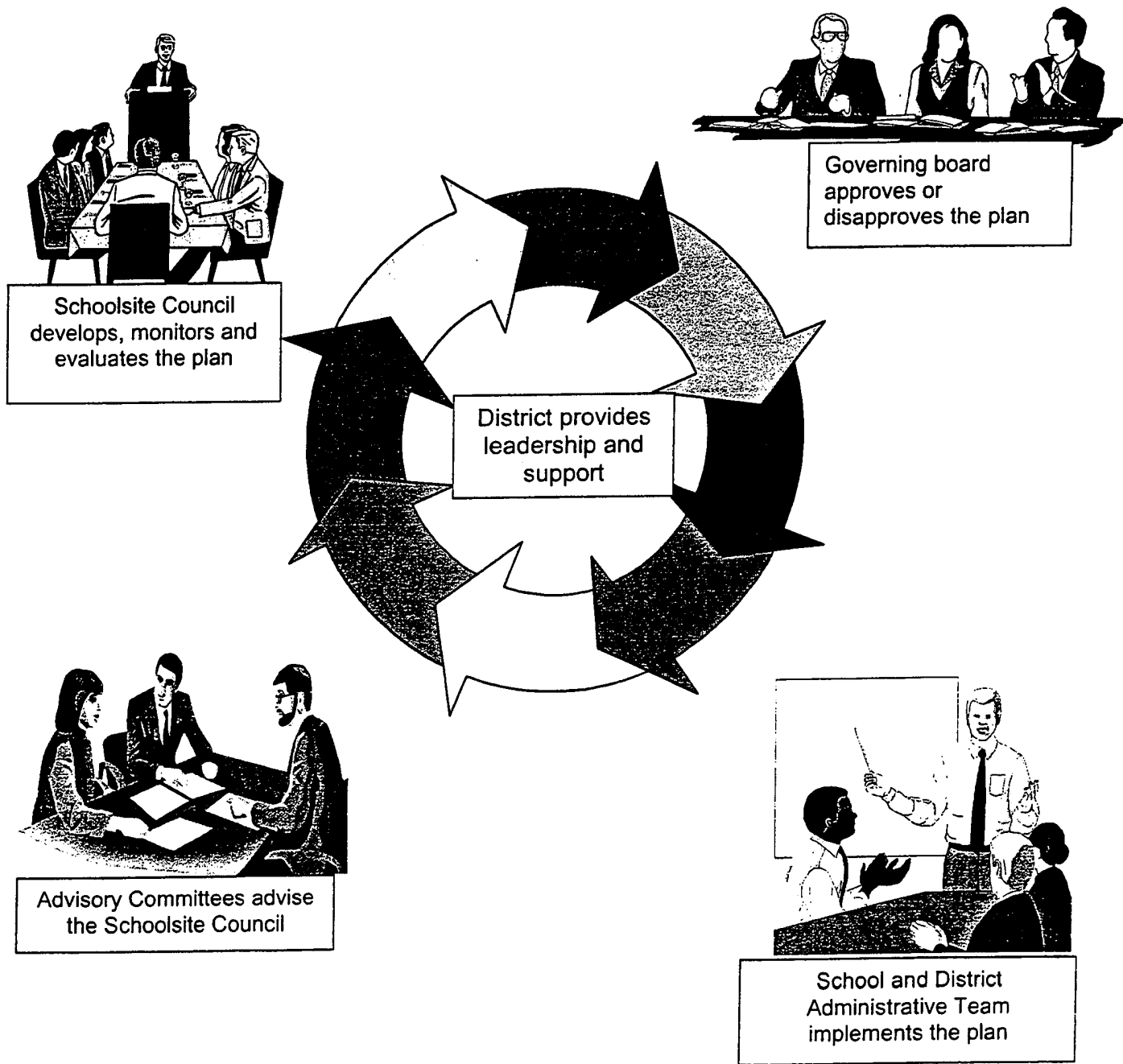
The local superintendent of schools or designee administers the Consolidated Application. The district and school administration, which may include appointed school leadership teams, is responsible for implementing the school plan. Administration of the plan includes assigning and supervising project staff, purchasing materials and equipment, and accounting for project funds. The administration may also support the planning process by providing training and information to the council, by gathering information or developing proposals for the council's consideration.

### Accountability

Because the board, administration and schoolsite council have separate but related responsibilities for the *Single Plan for Student Achievement*, they need to work cooperatively. Should an impasse occur, several remedies are available:

- The council may appeal to the local governing board to resolve issues of planning or implementation, clarify an issue in doubt, or establish a needed policy.
- The administration may recommend the board not approve a plan believed flawed.
- Individuals may file a formal complaint under the district's Uniform Complaint Procedure.
- The local governing board may develop policies to regulate or inform councils and staff in the performance of their duties.<sup>9</sup>

# FUNCTIONS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE PLAN FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



## Composition

Composition of the schoolsite council is specified in the California Education Code as follows:

"The council shall be composed of the principal and representatives of: teachers selected by teachers at the school; other school personnel selected by other school personnel at the school<sup>10</sup>; parents of pupils attending the school selected by such parents; and, in secondary schools, pupils selected by pupils attending the school.

"**At the elementary level** the council shall be constituted to ensure parity between (a) the principal, classroom teachers and other school personnel; and (b) parents or other community members selected by parents. In schools with fewer than three teachers, this requirement may be met by establishing a council that is composed of equal numbers of school staff and parents or other community members selected by parents.

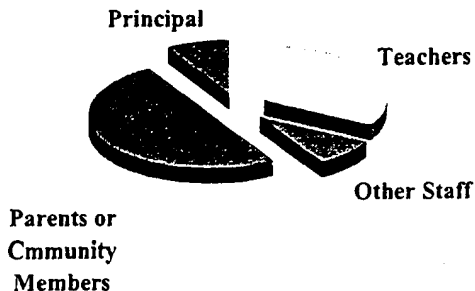
"**At the secondary level** the council shall be constituted to ensure parity between (a) the principal, classroom teachers and other school personnel and (b) equal numbers of parents or other community members selected by parents, and pupils.

"**At both the elementary and secondary levels**, classroom teachers shall comprise the majority of persons represented under subdivision (a) of this section.

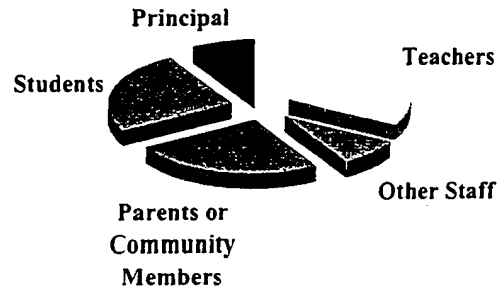
"School districts that maintain kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, and that maintain schools with fewer than 100 pupils each, and that share a common attendance area may establish a single schoolsite council for the common attendance area."<sup>11</sup>

At the discretion of the local governing board, the middle school may, but is not required to, include student representation on the council.<sup>12</sup>

**Composition of an Elementary  
Schoolsite Council**



**Composition of a Secondary  
Schoolsite Council**



## **Selection**

The means of selecting council members are not specified in law, except members are to be chosen by peers. Membership in most schoolsite councils is determined by ballot, but could be decided in an open meeting by voice vote. No membership qualifications are given in law.

To ensure broad support for the selection process, and to avoid controversy over the selection of council members, board policy or council bylaws should specify:

- The means of selection of members and officers
- Terms of office for members and officers
- The notice of elections for each peer group
- The responsibilities of the council and time commitment involved
- A policy of non-discrimination, as may occur by limiting membership to a select group

Many districts elect members for a two-year term, with elections for half the members held in even years and half in odd years. This practice ensures that the council will not be composed entirely of new members each year. Some districts assure additional continuity by electing non-voting alternate members, who become voting members in the event of a mid-term vacancy on the council.

## **Officers**

In order to conduct business effectively, the council will need officers with stated responsibilities and authority, including:

- A chairperson to organize, convene and lead meetings of the council
- A vice-chairperson to serve in the absence of the chairperson
- A secretary to record events and actions taken at council meetings
- A parliamentarian to resolve questions of procedure, often with the help of "Robert's Rules of Order" or similar guide
- Other officers needed to perform stated duties in support of the work of the council

## **School Principal**

The principal has the following duties with respect to the school plan:

- Is a voting member of the council
- Provides information and leadership to the council
- Administers the school-level activities of the approved plan

These responsibilities make the principal vital to the success of the school plan. However, the principal has no administrative authority over the council, may not veto decisions made by the council, and may not make changes to the plan approved by the council.

## **Committees**

In accordance with their bylaws and local governing board policies, the council may appoint committees or individuals to perform tasks that assist the council in developing, monitoring or evaluating the plan. Appointed individuals and committees serve at the pleasure of the council, and are advisory to it. Such appointed groups may:

- Gather and analyze information
- Propose strategies for improving instruction
- Examine materials, staffing or funding possibilities
- Draft portions of the school plan for council consideration.

For example, the council may ask that a group of teachers prepare a staff development proposal as part of a strategy to raise the academic performance of a group of under-performing students. Or, the council may appoint a committee to examine and report on a successful program operating at another school. In addition, the council may consider and accept unsolicited proposals from any individual or group.

### **Rules of Order**

Schoolsite councils must operate according to the following rules:<sup>13</sup>

1. Meetings must be open to the public
2. The public may address the council on any item within jurisdiction of the council
3. Notice of the meeting must be posted at the school site or other accessible place at least 72 hours before the meeting
4. The notice must specify the date, time, and place of the meeting and the agenda
5. The council cannot act on an item not described on the posted agenda unless, by unanimous vote, it finds a need for action unknown when the agenda was posted
6. Questions and brief statements of no impact on pupils or employees that can be resolved by providing information need not be described on the posted agenda
7. If these procedures are violated, upon demand of any person, the council must reconsider the item at its next meeting, after allowing for public input on the item

### **Bylaws**

While not required by law, it is good practice for a council to adopt bylaws to guide its actions beyond the rules of order provided by the law or local governing board policy. Bylaws can clarify such matters as the terms and election procedures of council members and officers, the council's regular meeting times, numbers of parents, teachers and students needed for a quorum, minimum attendance required of members, and so forth. An outline for sample bylaws is included in the Appendix.

### **Records**

The schoolsite council needs to maintain records of the following:

- Elections
- Official correspondence
- Agendas of council meetings
- Evidence of input from school advisory committees
- Minutes of meetings, recording attendance, discussions, recommendations and actions
- Copies of prior year school plans

Public records require safekeeping. Council records should be filed in a secure place at the school, and in accordance with district policy. Federal law requires that all records pertinent to a funded project be retained for three years.<sup>14</sup> Council records must be made available for public review upon request.

## **Essential Information**

Council members need specific information to enable them to plan, monitor and evaluate effective improvements. The following information is of particular importance:

- Input from school advisory committees
- Input from students, parents and staff, including responses to opinion surveys
- School allocations contained in the Consolidated Application
- Local board policies related to school plan development, such as the criteria to evaluate the success of categorical programs, or policies on schoolsite council elections. A copy of local board policies should be available at the office of the local superintendent of schools
- Purposes, requirements and principles of the state and federal categorical programs for which the council must plan<sup>15</sup>
- A list of sources of information on categorical programs included in the Appendix
- Student performance data. Links to data from the Academic Performance Index (API), Student Testing and Reporting (STAR), California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and School Accountability Report Card (SARC) are provided in the Appendix
- The school's program of instruction. This information can be gathered by reviewing local curriculum guides and grade level standards, by observing classes and services, and by inviting staff to describe their programs at meetings of the council

## **County Offices of Education**

County offices of education may provide information and training opportunities related to the development of school plans to school districts within their county. Many operate cooperatives for districts with less than \$75,000 of Consolidated Application funds and districts with larger allocations that choose to participate. Districts participating in a "co-op" receive assistance with the Consolidated Application, and in developing and implementing school plans. County Offices of Education may also assist districts in preparing for state compliance reviews of categorical programs.

## **Cycle of Plan Development**

The *Single Plan for Student Achievement* involves a continuous cycle of assessment, parent and community involvement, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The starting date of the annual planning cycle is a local decision. The calendar of planning activities may including the following tasks:

- Select council members and officers
- Train council members
- Obtain advisory committee input and community involvement
- Analyze student data and educational practice
- Develop the plan and related expenditures
- Submit the plan to the local governing board
- Monitor implementation
- Evaluate the results
- Amend the plan and expenditures as needed

The plan must be amended at least annually, and whenever there are material changes that affect the academic program for students at the school.<sup>16</sup>

## DECISION BY CONSENSUS

PERFECT CONSENSUS means that everyone agrees. It is collective opinion arrived at by a group of people working together under conditions that permit communications to be sufficiently open - and the group climate to be sufficiently supportive - so that all people in the group feel they have had a fair chance to influence the decision. All members understand the decision and are prepared to support it. It drives to eliminate "losers" and it considers differences of opinion as data, as opportunities for arriving at higher quality decisions.

It is possible to arrive at a "FALSE CONSENSUS" if members of a group fail to speak up. This can happen because of fatigue, time pressures, fear of group pressures, confusion or because of great complexity.

### Advantages:

Produces innovative, creative and high-quality decisions. Elicits commitment by all members to implement the decision; uses the resources of all members; future decision-making ability of the group is enhanced; useful in making serious, important and complex decisions to which all members are to be committed.

### Disadvantages:

Takes a great deal of time and psychological energy and a high level of member skills. Time pressure must be minimal and no emergency in progress.