
School Advisory Councils

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a School Advisory Council?

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is a school-based group intended to represent the school, the community, and those persons closest to the students. The group shares responsibility for guiding the school toward continuous improvement. The district school board is responsible, by Florida law, for establishing an advisory council for each school in the district and shall develop procedures for the election and appointment of advisory council members. Each SAC shall include in its name the words "school advisory council." For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

What is the role of the School Advisory Council?

The School Advisory Council is responsible for final decision making at the school relating to the implementation of the provisions of the annual School Improvement Plan (SIP). The SAC assists in the annual preparation and evaluation of both the SIP and the school's annual budget. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

Who serves on the School Advisory Council?

Beginning July 1, 2008, it is a requirement that the majority of the members of the School Advisory Council are persons who are not employed by the school district. A SAC should be composed of the principal and an appropriately balanced number of teachers, education support employees, students, parents, and other business and community citizens who are representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school. Certain members are elected by their peers, while business and community members are appointed, and the principal automatically serves. Only students in secondary schools serve on a SAC. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

How are business and community members selected?

The district school board is responsible for establishing procedures for selecting business and community members. This includes a means of ensuring wide notice of vacancies and seeking input on possible members from local businesses, chambers of commerce, community and civic

organizations, and the public at large. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

How are elections conducted?

The nomination and election procedures should be fair, equitable, and clearly outlined in the SAC's adopted bylaws. The SAC must represent teachers, education support employees, parents, and students who are elected by their respective peer groups at the school as follows:

- Teachers shall be elected by teachers
- Education support employees shall be elected by education support employees
- Parents shall be elected by parents
- Students shall be elected by students

Voting can occur at meetings or by mail, using written ballots or a show of hands. Ballots are counted, recorded, and retained. Ballots and voting records should be kept by a SAC officer, and the results are to be reflected in the official SAC minutes. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

Does the law require the composition of School Advisory Councils to reflect the racial balance of the student population attending the school?

No. An advisory legal opinion from the Florida Attorney General's Office issued on April 8, 2008, indicates that the composition of the SAC must reflect the ethnic, racial, and economic community in the geographic area served by the school—rather than the district at large or the actual student population attending the school. For further information, please see: [Advisory Legal Opinion AGO 2008-16, Attorney General's Office](#).

Who serves as Chair of the School Advisory Council?

Any member can be elected to serve as Chair. We recommend that neither a principal (in order to invite greater shareholder involvement) nor a student (due to lack of experience and maturity) fills this role. Some schools elect co-chairs so that a parent/community member and a school-based member can lead jointly.

Are persons serving as a School Advisory Council member required to be screened?

No. If the SAC member is a parent or business volunteer, no screening is required. However, districts are required to check volunteers' names with the sexual offender/predator database. For further information, please see: [Section 943.04351, Florida Statutes](#).

What is a quorum?

A majority of the membership of the council, more than half, constitutes a quorum. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)1, Florida Statutes](#).

Who develops the bylaws?

Each School Advisory Council adopts its own bylaws. The district may require procedures, policies, sample by-laws or a uniform template for all SACs in their district. For further information, please see [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\), Florida Statutes](#).

How much money is allotted to each SAC?

In the past, the annual General Appropriations Act has provided each SAC up to \$10.00 per student to be used for implementing the School Improvement Plan. On July 1, 2008, the SAC allocation was reduced to \$5.00 per unweighted Full Time Enrolled (FTE) student. If funds are insufficient to provide \$5.00 per student, the available funds will be prorated. The money is sent by FDOE to each district, which forwards allocations to each local school's SAC. Expenditures are reported to the State and are subject to annual audit. For further information, please see [Section 1001.42\(18\)\(c\), Florida Statutes](#) and [Section 24.121\(5\)\(c\), Florida Statutes](#).

How much notice is given to School Advisory Council members for agenda items?

The law states that each school is required to give at least three business days advance notice in writing to all members of the SAC on any matter that is scheduled to come before the council for a vote. Meeting dates can be posted on school web sites, marquees or bulletin boards, published in newsletters, announcements or local newspapers, or broadcast on TV. For further information, please see [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)2, Florida Statutes](#).

When are SAC meetings scheduled?

SAC meetings are to be scheduled when parents, students, teachers, businesspersons, and members of the community are able to attend. Location and time of day are important considerations for promoting attendance and participation. For further information, please see [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)3, Florida Statutes](#).

Can members who have been absent be replaced?

Yes. When replacing any member who has two or more consecutive unexcused absences from SAC meetings, the SAC will follow procedures in its bylaws or in district policies. For further information, please see [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)4, Florida Statutes](#).

Are meeting minutes required?

Yes. Minutes should be written or tape recorded and kept for one to three years. For further information, please see [Section 1001.452\(1\)\(d\)5, Florida Statutes](#) and [Florida's current records retention schedule for local government](#).

When is the best time to start the school improvement planning process?

Even though the school improvement planning process is ongoing, it is useful to start the evaluation and needs assessment processes in the spring. Districts select planning cycles that accommodate local needs.

Is a charter school required to have a School Advisory Council?

Yes. However, charter schools sometimes are able to have their governing body serve as their SAC. Refer to agreements in the charter contract on a school-by-school basis.

Does a charter school need to have a School Improvement Plan (SIP)?

Yes. It is a public school; therefore, it must have a SIP approved by the district or, if stated in the terms of its contract agreement, it may substitute its charter contract and annual report as the annual SIP.

Are DJJ programs required to have a School Improvement Plan?

Yes. According to HB 991 passed in the 2009 Legislative Session, each DJJ program must have a SIP.

Are schools required to include their dropout prevention and academic intervention programs in their School Improvement Plan?

Yes. Schools must "reflect" those programs in their SIPs. Response to Intervention (RtI) is among the academic interventions which should be reflected in the SIP. For further information, please see: [Section 1003.53\(2\)\(b\), Florida Statutes](#).

Do SAC meetings fall under the Sunshine Law?

Yes. All meetings of any board or commission of any state agency or authority, or of any agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution, at which official acts are to be taken are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times. No resolution, rule, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such meetings. The board or commission must provide reasonable notice of all such meetings. For further information, please see: [Section 286.011\(1\), Florida Statutes](#).

Are SACs allowed to sponsor fundraisers?

It is generally preferable to have the PTA, PTSO, Education Foundation, or other groups conduct school fundraisers in order to keep SAC allocations separate. Consult with your local school board about district policy.

If SAC funds are left over at the end of the school year, can they be carried over to the following year?

The intent of the Legislature is to have funds used during the school year in which they are awarded. A school board might allow funds to be carried forward, but always check with your District Finance Director first, and consult with your school board about district policy.

Can funds be used to pay stipends for members?

No. The Florida Attorney General has written an opinion that funds may not be used to pay a stipend to any member since a School Advisory Council is not a “project” or “program.” For further information, please see: [Memorandum Legal Opinion 00-03, Attorney General’s Office](#).

Who provides training for new SAC members?

The district office is responsible for training. Some education consortia also provide training. For further information, please see: [Section 1001.42\(19\)\(a\), Florida Statutes](#).

What topics are typically covered in SAC training?

Topics generally covered in SAC trains include, but are not limited to:

- Structure, Purpose, and Role
- Parent Involvement
- Way of Work
- Needs Assessments
 - Data collection and analysis
 - Local demographic data
 - School test scores
 - School grades and AYP
 - School Climate Surveys (optional)
- Developing and Communicating the SIP to Shareholders
- Evaluation of the SIP

How can a school obtain a Five Star rating?

The Five Star School Award was created by the Florida Department of Education, Commissioner's Community Involvement Council and is presented annually to those schools that have shown evidence of exemplary community involvement. In order to earn a Five Star School Award, a school must show documentation that it has achieved 100% of the established criteria in the categories of:

- Business Partnerships;
- Family Involvement;
- Volunteerism;
- Student Community Service; and
- School Advisory Councils.

Obtain guidelines, application forms, and information from your District Volunteer Coordinator. Application forms are located at: <http://www.fldoe.org/family/fivestar.asp>.