



Superintendent's Circular

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Version 01

SCHOOL SITE COUNCILS

This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

Engaging families and students as equal partners has been identified as a core strategy for improving student performance in the Boston School Committee goals and the BPS Engagement Policy. Family and student engagement is also a significant component of the Massachusetts School-Level Administrator Rubric.

This circular has been developed to help principals/heads of school effectively implement School Site Councils (SSC) as a foundational structure for engaging parents and students in school-based decision-making and school improvement. The Office of Family and Community Advancement (OFCA) collaborates with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) to provide oversight and support for SSCs.

For the purposes of this circular, the term “parent” includes a legal guardian or other person standing *in loco parentis* (such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare). Sect. 9101(31) ESEA.

ROLE AND PURPOSE

The role of the School Site Council is to engage parents and teachers to serve with the principal/head of school as the central decision-making body of the school. SSCs are required by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 and by the collective bargaining agreement between the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the Boston School Committee.

Under the school-based management/shared decision-making model described in the collective bargaining agreement between BPS and the BTU, the role of the SSC is to:

- Review and approve the Quality School Plan within guidelines established by the superintendent.
- Review and approve the recommendations of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) that have been endorsed by the principal/head of school and that will have a major effect on the school community.
- Review and comment on the entire school budget, including the general funds and external funds budgets, in a timely fashion.
- Approve the budget for discretionary school materials, supplies, textbooks, and equipment, including the use of school improvement award funds.
- 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.
- Develop and approve plans for increasing parent engagement in the school.

- Develop, review annually, and approve the School-Parent Compact as required by Title I.
- Receive information about all outside programs or outside professionals that come into the school.
- Approve waivers.

As the central governing body at the school, the SSC oversees all school-based committees, including the ILT and the Personnel Subcommittee.

The role of the ILT is to:

- Serve as an advisory body to the principal/head of school on issues related to teaching and learning, assessment, and professional development.
- Give a report each month to the SSC on ILT activities.
- Seek and receive SSC approval for any ILT recommendation that alters the Quality School Plan or may have a major effect on the school community.

Each school must elect a Personnel Subcommittee, whose composition must include two teachers, one parent, and the principal/head of school. The responsibilities of the Personnel Subcommittee are to:

- Approve the hiring of new BTU teacher bargaining unit staff and in-transfer of BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system and the choice of teachers from the excess pools.
- Approve the selection of lead teachers, mentor teachers, and new athletic coaches.
- Determine the schedule and procedures for reviewing

candidates for positions.

Schools must submit the names of the members of the Personnel Subcommittee to the Office of Family and Community Advancement by October 31. For additional information on the Personnel Subcommittee, see Superintendent's Circular FAM-04 Personnel Subcommittee.

SSC GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The following provisions describe how effective SSCs should operate.

1. SSC operations are governed by a BPS/BTU Joint Steering Committee, which includes parents and students. Any member of the SSC may file a complaint with the Steering Committee concerning the operation of the SSC at their school.
2. The SSC is expected to operate as a single decision-making team, working together to reach consensus, as opposed to being individual representatives of specific constituent groups.
3. Formally, decisions made by the SSC will be made by majority vote, with the principal/head of school voting with the majority.
4. The principal/head of school is required to account in writing and in person (at a subsequent meeting) for any vote in contravention of a majority of the council.
5. A quorum must be present to vote on issues. To constitute a quorum, the principal/head of school must be present as well as at least two teachers and two parents for SSCs with 9-12 members and three teachers and three parents for SSCs with 13 or more members.

6. The principal/head of school 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.
7. Other roles, such as note taker and any subcommittees, shall also be selected at the first SSC meeting of the school year.
8. At the first SSC meeting of the year, a calendar of meetings for the entire school year shall be established, ensuring that the times and dates are convenient for all members.
9. The agenda for the meetings shall be developed by the SSC co-chairs with input from other members of the SSC and the school community at large.
10. Each SSC is required to pass by-laws to govern its operations. 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 SSC 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.
11. All SSC meetings are subject to [DESE regulations regarding specific law](#), including publicizing meeting dates in advance and sharing meeting minutes with the school community.
12. On March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill which, among other things, extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025. These provisions allow for School Site Councils to meet remotely, provided that adequate access to the meetings is still available to the public. Please see <https://www.mass.gov/the-open-meeting-law> for more information or current updates. Decisions about hosting in- person or virtual school-based meetings

with families for SY 24-25 should be a shared decision with community members.

For additional information on SSC governance and operations, please contact the Office of Family and Community Advancement or refer to the Shared Decision-Making section of the collective bargaining agreement between BPS and the BTU.

COMPOSITION OF THE SSC

The SSC shall be composed of:

- The principal/head of school
- Elected members of the BTU who work more than 50% of their work week at that school
- Parents of children enrolled in that school elected by the School Parent Council
- Two students (high school only) enrolled in that school elected by the Student Government.

The specific number of parent and teacher representatives on the SSC is determined by the number of BTU members employed at the school. **The number of parent representatives on the SSC must be equal to the number of BTU representatives, plus the principal/head of school.** The table below demonstrates how the number of teacher and parent representatives are calculated.

School Site Council Representation*

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

*Plus, the principal/head of school and, as applicable, two students, as outlined above.

Schools may also select associate (non-voting) SSC members from community-based organizations, higher education, or businesses that partner closely with the school.

Each school shall also elect each year alternate parent, teacher, and student members of the SSC to substitute for absent members of their group. Alternate members who are elected by BTU bargaining unit members or parents to substitute for absent members may also fill vacancies created by the resignation or removal of SSC members.

Parents elected as SSC representatives must reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population at the school and include parents of students participating in a range of educational programs, such as special education and related services and programming for English Language Learners.

For specific information on the election process of BTU representatives, please refer to the Shared Decision-Making section of the collective bargaining agreement between BPS and the BTU.

SSC ELECTION PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING PARENT AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The following are key points for conducting successful elections.

- Principals/heads of school should designate an impartial staff person as the school's Election Facilitator. Elections should not be facilitated by the principal/head of school or by a parent currently serving on the SPC Executive Committee or SSC. The Office of Family and Community Advancement provides training, support, and materials for all election facilitators, and can facilitate elections provided that (a) a facilitator cannot be identified from within the school community, and (b) the school contacts Office of Family and Community Advancement with the election date, time, and location at least two weeks in advance.
- OFCA recommends that the school's Family Liaison is either the facilitator, co-facilitator, or observer of the election.
- Elections for SSC and SPC parent reps must happen in the fall of the new school year. Spring elections will no longer be accepted. This is to help make opportunities for engagement in the councils more equitable.
- Elections should be held at the first School Parent Council (SPC) meeting of the year and conducted at a time that is convenient for parents. The SPC consists of all parents in the school community. See Superintendent's Circular FAM-01 for additional details.
- Election of student SSC representatives at high schools should be incorporated into schools' student government election process.
- Schools should be prepared to provide translation and

interpretation, as well as childcare, at the parent election and at the meetings as needed.

- Parent elections typically take between 30 and 60 minutes. The election facilitator should be prepared to explain the role and purpose of the SPC and SSC, as well as provide an overview of each position and requirements of the election.
- Parents or legal guardians of students currently enrolled at the school are eligible to be elected to the SSC. Note: parents/legal guardians who work at their child's school cannot serve as the parent representative on the SSC.
- Parents may be nominated and elected to serve on both the SSC and the SPC executive committee/team.
- All families who are present at the election are allowed one vote per family per elected position. No absentee ballots will be accepted.
- Voting may be conducted by secret ballot or by majority vote.
- Upon completion of voting, each newly elected parent should complete an Elected Member Information Form and return it to the election facilitator.
- After the election, the school is responsible for submitting all election results to the Office of Family and Community Advancement

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL AND SCHOOL SITE COUNCIL

The School Parent Council elects parent members to represent the parent voice on the School Site Council. The SSC representatives are members of the SPC Executive Committee and should attend SPC meetings to provide regular updates on

the SSC proceedings to ensure opportunities for parent input and feedback. All SSC meetings are open to the public; therefore, any parent, staff person, or community member can attend. However, only the elected representatives can vote on SSC decisions.

SSC REPORTING

All BPS schools are required to submit their SSC rosters and materials listed below directly to the Office of Family, Student and Community Advancement by October 31. Additionally, schools are required to submit the following documents for the purposes of demonstrating compliance with MA Open Meeting Law and BPS policy:

- SPC roster
- SSC roster
- Personnel Subcommittee roster
- SSC meeting calendar for the year
- SSC meeting agendas, monthly
- SSC meeting notes, monthly
- SSC by-laws
- Family Engagement Plan
- Home-School Compact

The first deadline for submitting this documentation is October 31, at which time every school will be assigned one of the following statuses:

- *Full Compliance:* School has uploaded SSC and SPC roster, as well as all other SSC documentation.
- *Reporting:* School has uploaded SSC and SPC roster, with incomplete additional SSC documentation.
- *No Data:* School has not uploaded SSC and SPC roster.

SSC meeting agendas and notes should be submitted on request for updated SSC status to be maintained and/or updated.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Office of Family, Student and Community Advancement provides the following supports to schools to help them effectively conduct elections, provide the required documentation, and implement effective SSCs throughout the school year:

- Required election materials
- Election facilitation training
- Election facilitation, in the event that the school is not able to identify a facilitator and is able to request an election facilitator at least ten school days in advance
- SSC trainings, in collaboration with the BTU, on topics including SSC Basics, SSC Budget Basics, and Shared Decision-Making
- SSC manuals, including specific tools to support SSC operations and answers to frequently asked questions
- SSC trainings for high school students and adult allies
- Ongoing support, coaching, and technical assistance.

OPEN MEETING LAW REQUIREMENT

SSCs serve as the decision-making body of the school and are subject to certain aspects of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, per DESE Regulations. According to these laws, SSCs must adhere to the following requirements:

- Meeting dates and agendas must be posted publicly, with 48 hours advance notice.
- All SSC meetings must be open to the public.
- Meeting minutes and notes must be shared, posted, and kept in a place at the school where they are accessible.

For more complete information on the MA Open Meeting Law, go to www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/

ALIGNMENT WITH PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL EVALUATION

Effective implementation and the authentic engagement of parent, teacher, and student voice align with the following standards of the Massachusetts School Level Administrator Rubric:

- Indicator III-A1. Family Engagement
 - Engages parents, students, and teachers in creating a welcoming school environment and fostering a shared responsibility engagement.
- Indicator IV-A-3. Professional Culture
 - Plans and leads well-run and engaging meetings that have a clear purpose, focus on matters of consequence, and engage participants in a thoughtful and productive series of conversations and deliberations about important school matters.
- Indicator IV-B1. Policies and Practices
 - Creates opportunities for authentic parent, student, and teacher voice in school-based decision-making.
- Indicator IV-E-1. Shared Vision Development

- Parents, students, and teachers have an opportunity to shape the vision for the school as it pertains to instruction and school climate.
- Indicator IV-F-3. Consensus Building
 - Decisions are made using a consensus model, in which all members of the SSC have an equal voice.
 - Resolves conflicts among members of the school community.

IMPORTANT DATES

| Date | Activity |
|--------------|---|
| September 15 | Election dates submitted to the Family-School Engagement Practices Team, Office of Family and Community Advancement |
| October 15 | Deadline for completing elections of all parent, student, and teacher SSC representatives and submission of rosters |
| October 31 | Deadline for conducting first SSC meeting |
| October 31 | Deadline for submitting all required documentation to the Office of Family and Community Advancement |
| TBA | Districtwide SSC trainings |

For more information about this circular, contact:

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