

	<b>Superintendent's Circular</b>	<b>NUMBER: FAM-03 Version 01</b>
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## MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT GOVERNMENT

*This Circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.*

*“As we continue to work at improving the quality of education for all students, it is important that the voice of students be heard at the local, state and national levels.”*

[Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

Every Boston public middle and high school (including district schools, exam schools, and all alternative, pilot, and in-district charter schools) must have a written student engagement policy documenting opportunities for students to assume leadership roles within classrooms and the broader school community, in alignment with the 2016 BPS Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Policy. As part of this policy, each high school must also have a functioning and engaged student government. Middle schools are encouraged to have a student government. Student leaders in this body will represent their peers by serving as advisors, researchers, and participants in the decision-making process at the school and district level. Student government serves to engage students in learning about democracy and leadership.

Student government bodies are essential to ensuring equity in all aspects of schooling. With faculty and administrative support, student government members should:

- Ensure student voices are heard and incorporated in school

decision making through the School Site Council, (SSC)/Governing Board, and meetings with the administration.

- Develop and grow a body of student leaders by working closely with the faculty advisor(s) and the head of school.
- Organize the student body and advocate for policies, practices, and opportunities that will close opportunity gaps at the school and district level.

Through student government and SSC, students can assist in fulfilling the school's mission and design and improve the culture and climate of the school.

## **STUDENT GOVERNMENT COMPOSITION**

Schools will strive to form a student government that reflects the diversity of the student population in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, educational program (e.g., general, special, and bilingual education), and other factors. The number of participants should depend on the size of the school and what is manageable for the advisor. The recommendation is to have 10-15 students serve in student government.

It is recommended that student government members be connected to other school-based groups such as the School-Based Wellness Council and student clubs. These positions can be dual roles with other positions on Student Government or can be stand alone. The faculty advisor should help students think about their time and commitments and what it would mean to take on dual roles in the student government.

## **ROLE OF THE FACULTY ADVISOR**

The principal/head of school, with student input, should appoint

one or more faculty advisors to support and oversee each student government. The principal/head of school will include students in the selection process. Student governments can be considered school clubs, and as such principals/heads of school are strongly encouraged to pay a stipend to the faculty advisor(s).

The faculty advisor(s) will:

- Facilitate youth leadership in all aspects of student governance.
- Meet with the student government at least twice per month and provide support in organizing quarterly meetings each school year.
- Assist student government leaders in the development of action plans for the school and obtain the appropriate approvals before a plan is implemented.
- Assist student government leaders in planning and managing their events/activities, supporting with logistics and approval.
- Act as a liaison between the student government, School Site Council/Governing Board, and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT).
- Ensure the tracking of data and support members as they complete reporting on activities.
- Provide the principal/head of school with regular updates on how the action plans are being carried out.
- Advise student government leaders on their leadership and scholar-activism.
- Monitor and record all student work and approvals for proposals and dates.
- Develop student leaders by providing or facilitating training and support as necessary.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF SCHOOL EVALUATION**

Please refer to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Educator Evaluation: Appendix B: School-Level Administrator Rubric.

- Indicator III-A1. Family Engagement.
  - Engages SG in activities, events, and opportunities to create a welcoming environment.
  - Students contribute to the design by sharing their knowledge of family and culture.
  - Students evaluate and problem solve with staff and leadership challenges/barriers to including families in the school community.
- Indicator IV-B1. Policies and Practices.
  - Students participate in an activity identifying the makeup of the school.
  - Cultural Sharing day.
  - Students participate in SSC and/or other groups that develop culturally sensitive policies.
- Indicator IV-E-1. Shared Vision Development.
  - Students are part of the visioning process through focus groups, surveys, community meetings, etc.
  - Students share in the developing messaging for the student body.
- Indicator IV-F-3. Consensus Building.
  - Conflict resolution.
  - Restorative justice practices.
  - Student involvement in SSC and decision-making body.

## ELECTIONS

It is the responsibility of every principal/head of school to ensure that elections are held and the student government is established no later than October 15. The recommendation is that all student elections be held as one process by April 15 of the current school year to roll out the following school year. See the [Student Elections Toolkit](#) for guidance on facilitating student elections and all the necessary reporting forms.

## REPORTING

Once the student government is established, each school must send the student government roster to the Office of Youth Leadership, which must include:

1. Student information for all elected positions.
2. Student information for the two (2) students who are elected to serve on SSC or Governing Board (these students shall also serve on the Personnel Subcommittee).
3. Student information for the BSAC representative (see [Superintendent Circular FAM-06](#)).
4. Student information for the [Greater Boston Regional Student Advisory Council](#) (GBRSAC) representatives. Please note the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires secondary schools to host their student elections for GBRSAC representatives and those names be submitted no later than mid-April for the representatives serving the following school year.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL OVERVIEW

Middle school student governments serve the same functions as high school student governments. During middle school, students are building their self-advocacy skills to develop their voices, identities, and agency in the school community. Learning about leadership is a key activity for many middle school student governments. Student government members learn how to research, plan, organize, and execute programs and activities for many students. The student government advisor leads student government members in developing their leadership skills.

***Practicing Democracy:*** Governing democratically is a skill students learn during student government. Student government gives students hands-on experience in the workings of a democracy and teaches them how to work cooperatively with others. Meetings should be run to promote students' working together for the common good and learning how to put leadership into action.

***Planning and Implementing School Spirit Activities:*** Building school spirit and culture that is linguistically sustaining and affirming can be one of the projects of the student government. Through school events such as talent shows, fundraisers, and assemblies, students, teachers, faculty members and parents come together to help plan these activities throughout the school year and appoint various people to run these functions.

***Addressing Cares, Concerns, and Restorative Justice:*** Students will raise school concerns that can best be addressed in student government. Whether it is more nutritious foods served in the cafeteria or issues regarding school spirit days, student government meetings give students a forum for sharing their grievances and analyzing possible solutions to these problems. With the support of the Office of Restorative Justice, students

can be trained as circle keepers and can implement restorative justice to build community, repair harm, and promote collective healing.

#### SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Date	Activity
October 15	Deadline for student government elections to be held
October 15	Deadline for reporting the student government roster, including all student and faculty information listed above, to the Office of Youth Leadership at <a href="mailto:BSAC@bostonpublicschools.org">BSAC@bostonpublicschools.org</a>
October 31	Deadline for the first student government meeting to be held

**For more information about this circular, contact:**

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