

## Tips for Writing School Improvement Council Bylaws

Bylaws are the foundation for the effective operation of your school improvement council. Individual school improvement councils are free to develop the options that suit them best as long as the framework of the council is in compliance with state statute. For example the law requires at least two parents and two teachers to be elected by their peers at each school level; two students are also required to be elected on the high school level. Please consult the School Improvement Council Handbook – THE BASICS, to be sure that your council is in compliance with the law and also for other suggestions that you may want to include in your bylaws.

Note: You could use the sample bylaws posted on the SC-SIC website exactly as written if your school is an elementary or middle school simply by inserting the name of your school. High schools would only need to add students to their elected membership and increase the minimum number of appointed members to three. Some middle schools have begun to elect students to the SIC, but it is not required by law.

Key questions for consideration before completing your bylaws:

- Are there any special duties or requirements for the SIC that are specific to your district? An example might be that it could be a duty of the SIC to elect a representative to the district's governmental relations council.
- Will your ex-officio members be voting members of the council? Councils decide which members vote and when: ex-officio are not to vote for officers which is a duty assigned to the elected and appointed members combined, but the ex-officio members might be assigned voting privileges in other matters.
- Do you want to have designated ex-officio members on your council that must be filled by a specific organization (e.g. PTA) or position (e.g. school resource officer). What groups on your campus contribute to the success of your school? Which of these groups should be named in the bylaws to be ex-officio on the SIC?
- The law determines a minimum number of council members for each category of membership. Your bylaws should indicate the number for each category that is appropriate for your council. Very large councils can be difficult to conduct effectively but the council does need to reflect the broad base representation of the community served by the school.
- The council is encouraged to have standing committees which reflect the strategic plan goals of the school, one committee per goal. People who are interested in being a part of the SIC who were not elected or appointed to the council as a member can be selected to chair or serve as a member of a SIC committee.

- When should elections be held? Many councils are now holding elections in the spring instead of waiting until fall. These councils choose spring because they can use the summer months to get organized and be fully prepared to work at the start of school. State law requires the SIC elections occur by October 15 each year, and the membership information be sent to the South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) office in Columbia by November 15. The procedure for getting the membership information to SC-SIC is done electronically and the district will inform each school about the process. SC-SIC cannot begin to send newsletters and other information to the newly elected council members until their contact information is received. The sooner your council is in place and your contact information is received, the sooner services can be delivered to your council. The SC-SIC office can help you develop the election process for your SIC.
- How will your council handle parent and community requests to speak at meetings? Councils must develop strategies that allow the public to be heard at meetings and also ensure that council business is carried out. Some councils require people who want to speak to make a request ahead of time to be on the agenda for an appointed time. Others have a “public comment” section of the meeting with a set limit for the length of the comment. Still others have some combination of both. Hotly contested issues need to be aired but must not be allowed to “take over” the meeting. In some cases a special meeting or forum may be called to ensure all parties have the opportunity to have input about important and complicated issues that affect their children.

If you need additional assistance to develop or amend your bylaws please contact the South Carolina School Improvement Council office at 800-868-2232 or [sic@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:sic@gwm.sc.edu).