

*Pinellas County Schools*

School  
Advisory  
Council  
Operations  
Manual



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# Chapter I

## Why Are We Here?

- Challenges and Opportunities for Our Schools
- What is a School Advisory Council
- School Advisory Council Do's and Don'ts
- Sunshine Law for School Advisory Councils

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## Resource Materials

- Florida State Law/County Policy — Comparison Chart
- School Board Policy for SAC
- District Comprehensive Plan

# Challenges and Opportunities for Our Schools

*Children are living messages we send  
to a time we will not see.*

In view of the increased rate of social change, technological growth, competition for scarce resources and the need to prepare students for the demands of increasingly high-skilled, high performance workplaces, challenges to schools are tremendous. Returning most of the important decisions about learning and teaching to local communities has created new opportunities to shape the future of schools in positive ways. In order to help create desirable educational futures for our children and youth, it is extremely important that the following conditions exist in the schools:

- School-based leaders taking leadership roles in thinking strategically (that is, long-range as well as short-term), planning for the uncertain future and managing change constructively.
- Staff, students, parents and community members working together as a total learning community in order to create schools that will meet the changing needs of our students.
- Making the best possible use of available resources while new resources are being found.
- School improvement plans that represent commitments to action.
- Accountability as a central part of the school improvement/strategic planning process.
- Success for all students as the focus of school improvement plans. No child gets left behind.

Often we accept traditional ways of doing things without ever questioning the reasons behind the process. And if we do ask questions, we are often told “But we’ve always done it this way.” Change does not come easily. Any time we try something new we risk failure. But that must not stop individuals or institutions from trying new or different ways to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.

The passage of Florida’s System of School Improvement and Accountability by the Florida Legislature in 1991 helped create the current practice of School Advisory Councils involvement in school improvement and accountability.

This “grassroots” approach has great potential for stimulating changes in how we think of learning, teaching and schools in general. By moving important decision making to the school level and community, we are able to be more flexible, more responsive to the local community and better handle rapid changes in students needs. In addition, we will be able to put our money and our other limited resources where they will best address student and community needs, and build community support for public education.

## **Just What is a School Advisory Council?**

The School Advisory Council (SAC) is a team of individuals from various segments of the community—parents, teachers, students, administrators, support staff, business/industry people and other interested community members. The purpose of the SAC is to *assist the principal in developing and evaluating the results of the school improvement plan and the annual school budget.*

It is the responsibility of the School Advisory Council to help increase student success. In the process of developing the school improvement plan, the SAC conducts a needs assessment that identifies internal and external factors that affect student learning. Then, working with the information revealed by the needs analysis, the SAC assists in clarifying the vision for the school and establishing indicators of student success. The SAC focuses on the needs of students, including what they need to know (curriculum content) and be able to do (performance application). The plan also should reflect any special interests and needs of the students and community served by the school. Another primary task of the SAC is to regularly communicate with other parents, educators, students and the community about the school improvement plan. Other key responsibilities of the School Advisory Council include:

- working as a team;
- holding well-publicized, open meetings;
- encouraging innovation; and
- involving other members of the school community in the school improvement process.

Each school in the State of Florida must have a SAC. While Pinellas County Schools has always encouraged parent and teacher participation in the strategic planning process at both the district and school levels, Florida law requires it. Also by law, each School Advisory Council must be composed of the principal and an “appropriately balanced” number of stakeholders. These individuals must be representative of the ethnic, racial and economic makeup of the community served by the school. High schools and vocational-technical centers must have students on their SACs (vocational-technical centers are not required to include parents). Middle schools may or may not include

students, but they are encouraged to do so. Elementary schools cannot have students on their official SAC roster. **In any event, the majority of SAC members (over 50 percent) must be non-district employees.**

How many people are we talking about? There is no magic number. A small elementary school may need a small group. A diverse high school might need a very large group. The small group may work on everything together. The large group may use subcommittees for specific tasks. However, either group will involve other members of the school community in their work. Balance is the key because, in the end, everyone needs to feel ownership. The important thing to remember is that SACs will be creating plans for improving the learning of students. This is an awesome responsibility that requires the cooperation of everyone.

***Background.*** In May 1991, the Florida School Improvement and Education Accountability legislation was authorized by the Florida Legislature to require every school in Florida to develop and evaluate a school improvement plan. As a framework to assist schools with school improvement plans, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) published guidelines for school improvement. Pinellas County Schools designated the integrated management system, a type of strategic planning commonly known as linkages, as the recommended process for developing, implementing and evaluating school improvement plans. ***All schools and adult/technical centers in the district now use the Integrated Management System to develop their school improvement plans.***

***The school as the basic planning unit.*** The Florida School Improvement and Educational Accountability Act places the focal point of improving schools at the school site. This is accomplished through the School Advisory Council.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,  
committed citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

*Margaret Mead*

# **SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

## **DOES:**

- Consist of teachers, students, parents, education support personnel, elected by their peers, and other citizens representative of the ethnic, racial and economic community served by school.
- Send the list of members to the School Board on an annual basis for approval. Changes in membership after the official approval may occur due to bylaw requirements.
- Assist in preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan. The plan is designed to achieve the state education goals and student performance standards. The plan must also address issues relative to budget, training, instructional materials, technology, staffing, student support services, and other matters of resource allocation as determined by school board policy.
- Perform functions as prescribed by regulations of the school board.
- Assist in preparing the school's annual budget and School Improvement Plan.
- Decide how lottery enhancement funds for school improvement will be spent.
- Adhere to the Sunshine Law.

## **DOES NOT:**

- Have any of the powers and duties reserved by law for the school board or its staff.
- Have any state mandates other than those prescribed by the accountability legislation and the Sunshine Law.

**FLORIDA SCHOOL LAW for**  
**SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS**  
**1001.452**

- School Advisory Council (SAC) meetings are public meetings and subject to the Government in the Sunshine Law.
- All meetings at which discussions and deliberations, as well as formal actions, take place must be open to the public.
- Formal actions are considered binding only when made at meetings held in accordance with the Sunshine Law.
- Minutes of the meetings must be recorded and open to public inspection.
- All meetings must be held in a facility or location accessible to the public.
- SAC members who knowingly attend a meeting not held in accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Law are guilty of a misdemeanor.
- SACs should follow local district guidelines.



# Chapter II

# Putting Your School Advisory Council Together

- Composition of School Advisory Councils
- Selection of School Advisory Council Members
- Everyone Has a Role to Play
- Recruitment of School Advisory Council Members

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## Resource Materials

- Guidelines for Accurate Minutes



## **Composition of School Advisory Councils**

School Advisory Councils will include the school principal and a balanced number of district-based and non-district based members. This would include teachers, education support employees, students, parents and business/community representatives. Members will be representative of the ethnic, racial and economic community served by the school. Student representation on the advisory council is required for vocational-technical centers and high schools and is encouraged at the middle school level.\* Elementary school student representation may not be part of an official SAC. Parent representation at vocational-technical centers is voluntary.

## **Selection of School Advisory Council Members**

State law requires the election of most members of the School Advisory Council. Council members who represent teachers, education support employees, students and parents must be “elected by their respective peer groups at the school in a fair and equitable manner” as follows:

- Teachers must be elected by teachers.
- Education support employees must be elected by education support employees.
- Students must be elected by students.
- Parents must be elected by parents.
- Non-parent business or other community members are appointed by the school (no election required).

The principal is responsible for ensuring that the elections take place and the composition of the SAC complies with the law. If the election process does not yield a SAC that reflects racial, ethnic and economic diversity of the school community, the principal may appoint additional SAC members to achieve the appropriate representation. **And don’t forget the 51 percent rule — that is, the majority of SAC members must be non-district employees.**

### **\*GUIDELINES**

#### **Regarding Middle and Elementary School Student Involvement**

Florida Statute 1001.452 states, “Technical center and high school advisory councils shall include students and middle and junior high school advisory councils may include students.” The statute does not address elementary school students on a SAC.

#### **Middle School Guidelines**

If the name of a middle school student is included on the SAC roster as an official

member, then:

- The student must regularly attend the SAC meetings according to the SAC member attendance requirements in the school's bylaws.
- The student's vote may not be used as the determining vote regarding a SAC issue (e.g., SIP approval).
- The student representative(s) must be elected by the students (per state statute).

If a middle school that does not wish to follow the guidelines shown above desires to have student representation on SAC to receive more student input, then these students should be considered as non-voting Sac members and should not be listed on the school's official SAC roster.

Each middle school must include its student participation guidelines in the school's SAC bylaws.

### **Elementary School Guidelines**

If an elementary school desires to have student representation on SAC to receive more student input, then these students should be considered as non-voting SAC members and should not be listed on the school's official SAC roster.

Each elementary school must include its student participation guidelines in the school's SAC bylaws.

## **Everyone Has a Role to Play**

As schools have assumed greater responsibilities and the role of schools has become more complex, educators are among the first to admit that they cannot possibly possess all the information and expertise necessary to meet all of the needs of students today. **Parents, business and other community stakeholders have essential roles to play in the total effort to improve schools and the School Advisory Council can be an excellent vehicle for this cooperative spirit.**

The bottom line is that the job of educating our youth is a big one—too big for the professionals to accomplish alone. Educators need the support, advice, expertise and energy of students, parents and **other** community people bring to the planning process. Who benefits from this cooperation? The answer is: Not only our students, but everyone! Each SAC member has an individual role as the council works together for improvement.

***Principal.*** The principal plays a lead role in school improvement. In addition to involving all the stakeholder groups in determining the school's priorities for improvement, the principal is instrumental in creating a student and parent friendly environment.

Effective school improvement planning occurs in schools where teacher, parent, student and community input and expertise is recognized and valued by the principal, decision making is shared and consensus is a primary goal.

- Responsible for the overall administration at a given school, including supervising instruction.
- Assesses school data as it relates to the three district strategic directives. Additional needs assessment information comes from customer surveys.
- Leads in the development, revision and successful implementation of the school improvement plan.
- Takes an active role in forming a shared vision for the future of the school.
- Ensures that the appropriate elections and appointments of School Advisory Council members are carried out.
- Stays current on school-based strategies, educational best practices and research, especially those areas that relate to the school improvement plan, and shares this information with the SAC, staff members and all stakeholder groups.
- Keeps the SAC informed of relevant policies and activities of the school, district and state.
- Ensures that proper orientation and training of School Advisory Council members are provided.
- Encourages participatory problem solving, consensus building and effective teamwork.
- Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments related to the school improvement planning process.
- Obtains direct feedback at regular intervals from students, parents, staff and other community members regarding the school improvement effort.
- Schedules regular SAC meetings.

***SAC Chairperson.*** The SAC chairperson is selected by the SAC either by vote or consensus as determined in the bylaws. The chairperson presides over the SAC and carries out the following specific duties:

- Calls SAC meetings to order, maintains order and sees that the meetings are properly adjourned.
- Works closely with the principal (or an executive committee that includes the principal) to plan each meeting and establish an agenda in time to notify the

members of the purposes of the meeting and accepts item for the agenda.

- Orients the SAC secretary (and other officers, if any) in his/her duties.
- Maintains a focus on issues that have school-wide implications.
- Becomes knowledgeable about the school improvement/strategic planning process.
- Shares leadership with the principal and other SAC members.
- Encourages everyone to participate at meetings.
- Follows through on unfinished business efficiently.
- Becomes informed about current and emerging educational best practices and the statutory regulations, rules and procedures related to school improvement.
- Requests volunteers to serve as subcommittee members and delegates responsibilities.
- Notifies all members of upcoming meeting dates.
- Informs SAC of relevant training.
- Signs the school improvement plan.

**SAC Secretary.** The SAC secretary is selected by the SAC either by vote or consensus. The secretary carries out the following specific duties:

- Keeps accurate, complete minutes and shares minutes with members.
- Maintains up-to-date files of minutes.
- Keeps accurate records of attendance.

**SAC Members.** Council members have a responsibility in the school improvement process as spokespersons for the stakeholder groups they represent. Members:

- Are actively involved in developing their school's vision or mission.
- Use district strategic directions/goals as guiding principles for everything the council does.
- Examine thoroughly all aspects of their school when developing the school improvement plan.
- Determine and prioritize needs of the school.
- Develop strategies for improving the areas most important to their school.

- Decide how to measure the results of what they plan to do.
- Assist in the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan.
- Assist in preparing the school’s annual budget.
- Assist in recruiting and retaining other school advisory council members.
- Decide on the expenditure of SAC funds to meet school improvement plan goals.
- Participate regularly in SAC meetings and carry out assignments.
- Represent the views and interest of school staff, students, parents and the community.
- Assist in identifying community resources or educational programs and innovations that can aid in the accomplishment of the school improvement plan.
- Link the SAC, community, families, and the school through personal contacts, written reports and community meetings.
- Shares leadership of the SAC.

**Teachers.** Effective school improvement is best encouraged, not by finding out “what works” and telling people in schools how to do it, but by creating schools in which teachers and students are expected, as a condition of their work, to take responsibility for their learning as well as to apply their knowledge.

Teachers must have a major role in any effort at a school that is intended to have an impact on teaching and learning, including the school improvement plan. This will involve teachers assuming greater leadership roles, not just in the classroom, but in school-wide decision making. Specific roles/duties of teachers and other school staff on the SAC include the following:

- Represent the views and interests of the staff at the school.
- Participate regularly in SAC meetings and carry out assignments.
- Become informed about the overall educational program of the school.
- Serve as resources for the SAC by providing specialized information about educational programs, innovations, instructional strategies and other school resources.
- Assist in identifying community resources that can aid in accomplishing the school improvement plan.
- Encourage other school staff to support SAC activities and the goals and

objectives of the school improvement plan.

- Help implement the objectives and activities of the school improvement plan.
- Keep other staff members informed about school improvement.

***Support Staff/Paraprofessionals.*** It is extremely important that support personnel and paraprofessionals such as clerical staff, custodians, aides, bus drivers and cafeteria workers be included as SAC members. Their perspectives and insights can make a big difference.

***Students.*** Students are sometimes overlooked in the school improvement planning process. However, they should be active partners (at least at the secondary level). Often their perspectives add a unique and valuable flavor to the school improvement plan. Students who are not actual SAC members can be involved in other ways, such as special student council activities, creative writing projects and discussion groups.

***Parents.*** The parental point of view is crucial to effective school improvement. When parents are involved in their children's education, children go to better schools, and children do better in schools. Parent members of the SAC can (and should) have the following duties:

- Represent the views and interests of parents and the community.
- Participate regularly in SAC meetings and carry out assignments.
- Become knowledgeable about the personnel and material resources of the school, community and the school's educational program.
- Serve as resource persons for the SAC, especially in community-related matters that affect the school program, staff and students.
- Assist in obtaining community resources to aid school improvement efforts.
- Link the SAC, community and school through personal contacts, written reports and community meetings.
- Keep other parents and community members informed about school improvement.

***Business and Community.*** While community support always has been important to the success of schools, that role is expanding. Today schools must draw on community involvement and expertise to accomplish significant improvement. These representatives bring unique and valuable viewpoints to school issues, and focus on the need for education that results in students well prepared for today's workplace.

***Superintendent/District-Level Staff.*** The superintendent and other district-level personnel play essential roles in improving schools by providing support services and

technical assistance for schools to meet their goals and objectives. In particular, district personnel are responsible for collecting information about students and schools, informing schools of the most up-to-date research on best educational practices, ensuring that school plans are consistent with district goals and objectives, providing necessary training to support the school-based strategic planning and monitoring each school's progress toward achieving the goals and objectives listed in their plans.

**School Board Members.** The school board must approve the membership of the School Advisory Councils, as well as the completed school improvement plans. Other important functions of the school board are to mobilize public support for the school improvement effort and provide adequate resources and incentives to carry out the goals and objectives written into the plans.

## *The Power of Teamworking*

**T**ogether: **The Strength of a Common Purpose.** Shared vision and purpose collects and focuses energy. A team can draw upon the experiences, talents, knowledge, skills and contacts of all its members. They share in a common purpose that gives meaning and direction to their actions. Members of a team combine and share their spiritual and emotional strength.

**E**ach: **Commitment to Team Motivates Each to Excel and Grow.** The sense of shared vision prompts each individual team member to go the extra mile—not only to continue beyond where he or she would normally give up, but also to make excellence a consistent value. Within the environment of a supportive team the individual feels safe to explore new ideas, test new skills and try out new modes of self-expression.

**A**ccomplishes: **A Team is Organized for Action.** A well-organized team is an efficient vehicle for advancing an agreed-upon purpose through the achievement of definite (measurable) objectives. It organizes and divides the labor so as to take full advantage of individual strengths and abilities. The shared goals of the team are measured and assessed by feedback systems.

**M**ore: **The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts.** A committed team has, as well as the efficiency of planned action, the indefinable power of synergistic action. As a team develops its own rhythm and harmony, it can move beyond mere rational thought into a realm of intuitive group action. Things happen which never could have been planned or predicted. The dynamic force released when team members' energies become focused around common objectives is truly awesome in its power to generate ideas, attract opportunities and execute action. Teaming works!

## **Recruitment of SAC Members**

An effective recruiting method is simply to ask people to put themselves up for election to the SAC. People often respond positively when they are asked to do *meaningful* work on a project. Don't assume everyone is familiar with the purpose of SAC. All potential SAC members should receive a copy of the small SAC guide to help them make a decision.

Some people will show up on your door and knock it down to be involved. Many more people whose input is needed won't initiate involvement. It isn't that they don't care about the school, so don't give up! Ask others for recommendations of people who might be interested and willing to serve if elected. Different approaches might work better to get the various representatives needed. Don't underestimate the importance of telling people why they are needed — that is, not just to fill a slot, but to bring a valuable perspective that might not be represented without them.

Look at solving any problems that may deter involvement. For example, if possible, provide baby-sitting and/or transportation. Try to hold SAC meetings at least some of the time at places other than the school and at times of the day that facilitate teacher, parent, student and community member participation. For example, a business member might be willing to host a meeting or two.

### ***General recruitment strategies:***

- Personal written letter or phone call of invitation to join SAC
- Announcements in the school newsletters
- Press releases in local newspapers
- School marquee

### ***Parents:***

- Parent Teacher Association/Parent-Teacher-Student Association or other parent organizations
- Active parent volunteers
- Parents of Doorways scholars
- Title I parents
- Parents of Exceptional Student Education students
- Parents of Prekindergarten students
- Feeder school parents who have previously served on SAC

***Business and Community:***

- Active senior/community school volunteers
- Before/after child care agency representatives
- Civic/service organizations
- School business partners
- Chambers of Commerce
- Religious community representatives
- Local city/county governments

***Teachers:***

- Adult/community school
- Exceptional student education
- Prekindergarten
- Specialists (i.e., Physical Education, Art, Library Information Specialist)

***Students:***

- Student council
- Student clubs/organizations
- Adult education students



# Chapter III

# **SAC Operating Procedures**

- Making It Work
- Guidelines for Writing Bylaws
- Planning and Conducting Effective SAC Meetings
- Keeping SAC Members Coming
- Sharing SAC Information

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## **Resource Materials**

- Ice Breaker
- Sample Bylaws (Elementary, Middle, High)



## **Making It Work**

This chapter provides practical suggestions and information to principals and SAC members for getting organized, conducting council business, keeping members involved and solving problems you are likely to meet along the way. The suggestions and information contained in this chapter have been used successfully by schools in developing effective school advisory councils. Nevertheless, circumstances vary from school to school and these guidelines are purposefully flexible.

### **Guidelines for Writing Bylaws**

The best way to ensure successful School Advisory Council meetings is to establish ground rules that all the members can live with and by which SAC meetings are conducted. Drawing up formalized bylaws can achieve successful meetings. Included below are instructions on developing workable bylaws. SACs have written policies and procedures to guide them in their efforts. Without clearly stated bylaws, SACs may become entangled in confusion and conflict. However, a common mistake of councils is to make their bylaws too comprehensive by trying to predict every situation that may arise. Bylaws that are too restrictive will actually prevent the SAC from achieving its goals. Bylaws should allow for amendments.

Schools have asked for suggestions on how to incorporate the statutes and school board policy into their bylaws. This bill requires school advisory councils to adopt bylaws that include specified procedures. District school boards may review all proposed bylaws; a record of minutes of council meetings must be kept at each school site.

#### **Exact language as follows:**

Florida Statutes, to read:

1001.452 District and school advisory councils.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(d) Each school advisory council shall adopt bylaws establishing procedures for:

1. Requiring a quorum to be present before a vote may be taken by the school advisory council. A majority of the membership of the council constitutes a quorum.

2. Requiring at least 3-days' advance notice in writing to all members of the advisory council of any matter that is scheduled to come before the council for a vote.

3. Scheduling meetings when parents, students, teachers, business persons, and members of the community can attend.

4. Replacing any member who has two unexcused consecutive absences from a school advisory council meeting that is noticed according to the procedures in the bylaws.

5. Recording minutes of meetings.

The district school board may review all proposed bylaws of a school advisory council and a record of minutes must be maintained at the school site.

In order to comply with current Florida statutes regarding the composition of school advisory councils, many SACs have made amendments to their bylaws this year. Whenever you make a change to the bylaws, please send a copy to the office of the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. That office will add the new bylaws to your school's notebook.

To get the council started, a generic bylaw format is presented here. (See appendix for additional sample.)

<b>ARTICLE I</b>	<u>NAME OF ORGANIZATION</u>
<b>ARTICLE II</b>	<u>PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS</u>
<b>ARTICLE III</b>	<u>BASIC POLICIES</u>
<b>ARTICLE IV</b>	<u>DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS</u>
<b>ARTICLE V</b>	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u>
<b>ARTICLE VI</b>	<u>OFFICERS AND THEIR ELECTION</u>
<b>ARTICLE VII</b>	<u>DUTIES OF OFFICERS</u>
<b>ARTICLE VIII</b>	<u>MEETINGS</u>
<b>ARTICLE IX</b>	<u>STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES</u>
<b>ARTICLE X</b>	<u>PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY</u>
<b>ARTICLE XI</b>	<u>AMENDMENTS</u>

Amendments are formal changes to the bylaws. This article should include the method of proposing amendments and notification to the membership of the proposed change (for example, a two-thirds majority of total membership, or a simple majority of those voting).

ADDITIONAL ARTICLES

Additional articles unique to your SAC and community may be desired. Such articles might address organizational structure, relationship to other advisory bodies, and training for SAC members.

# **Planning and Conducting Effective SAC Meetings**

## **SAC meetings should serve a specific purpose**

- Develop an agenda and stick to it.
- Distribute a copy of the agenda with items to be discussed at the meeting to SAC members prior to your meeting and have additional copies ready for visitors or concerned citizens who may attend your meeting.
- Assign tasks or specific responsibilities for follow-up at the next meeting; the chairperson will include the topic on the next agenda.
- End your meetings as scheduled. If a group wishes to stay and work after the meeting is over, that's great. Just be sure to respect other people's time schedules and allow them the chance to leave without making them feel as if they have given the group anything less than their best. If the meeting needs to be extended longer than originally planned, get a consensus from the group to continue.
- Make and distribute copies of that meeting's minutes once the meeting is over, prior to the next meeting, so members are prepared.

## **Define a process to address issues that arise**

- When concerns are raised by SAC members, they need to be studied.
- If necessary, issues of concern may be referred to and addressed by a specific standing committee. Subcommittees can be formed and chaired by a SAC member.
- Non-SAC members with a particular interest or area of expertise might be invited to serve on a subcommittee for a specific amount of time.
- Try to provide each subcommittee with someone who has expertise in the area being researched or item to be discussed.
- These small groups will be successful when given specific instructions, expectations and timelines.

## **Tips for a meeting that will draw a crowd**

- Begin and end each SAC meeting at a specific time. Members should know the time limits and how closely they will be followed. To delay the start of a

meeting waiting for late arrivals is to penalize those who have arrived on time.

- Utilize a pre-meeting “arrival and refreshments” period to serve as a transition between the members travel and the meeting itself.
- Plan the agenda so that the SAC can cover the agenda within its time limits.
- Utilize a strong subcommittee system in which the SAC serves in a steering and action-taking capacity.
- Prepare for the meeting in advance. Very few people enjoy arriving for a meeting only to end up pushing tables, lifting chairs, and waiting for the coffee water to heat. Conversely, most individuals enjoy arriving for a meeting with the tables and chairs set up, refreshments ready, room comfortable and attractive.

## **Ideas for Good Communication during Meetings**

- The chairperson and principal thank people for everything they do, using their names (suggestion: use name tags or tent cards for everyone at every meeting).
- Encourage quiet members to express their opinions on an issue.
- Circular seating facilitates communication.
- Get members involved. Give them jobs! The chairperson and principal should not try to do it all themselves.
- Follow up on assignments at your next meeting (read over the minutes of the meeting).
- The chair might start meetings with a “thought for the day” or read a positive announcement of school progress on an improvement objective.
- Send out the minutes to members with the proposed agenda for the next meeting.
- Encourage discussions of school-wide issues, not an individual member’s personal agenda.

## **Keeping SAC Members Coming – Retention**

Active SACs are characterized by regular attendance of interested members. This is often achieved by the following:

- Developing and maintaining a strong commitment to teamwork.
- Discussing the roles and responsibilities of the SAC. Share training information and materials available to SAC members.
- Schedule pre-meeting social time, icebreakers with refreshments. Any purchase of food or food-related items must be for the purpose of supporting a student curricular objective.
- Making tasks or activities truly worthwhile. People need to feel what they are asked to do is really important.
- Having an agenda prepared and distributed in advance.
- Providing for participation from each member by using a variety of methods such as brainstorming or small group discussion.
- Providing members with minutes or reports of previous meetings.
- Making services such as baby-sitting and transportation available, after the principal checks with the Risk Management Department.
- Using language understood by all members, taking care to explain any educational jargon.
- Announcing meetings in school newsletters well in advance. A designated area of the school should contain notice of time, place and agenda; in addition, similar notices could be submitted to community bulletin boards, neighborhood newsletters and community newspapers.
- Thanking SAC members for time and effort on a regular basis.
- Following up regularly with members who frequently miss meetings to solve attendance difficulties.
- Having an open-door policy that encourages visitors and volunteers to attend meetings.
- Establish a phone tree for meeting reminder phone calls.

## **Sharing SAC Information**

Keeping the cooperative spirit and the power of collaboration in mind, internal and external communication is the key to any successful group.

- Internal (within the school): communication between staff and communication with PTA.
- External (community at large): web site, marquee, newsletter and local newspaper articles (Top of Class).

### **Suggested Guidelines for the PTA/School Advisory Council Relationship**

A PTA member should be selected as liaison to the SAC. The liaison person would:

- Attend all SAC meetings.
- Provide input into decisions.
- Serve as a member of the PTA executive board.
- Report to the PTA meetings on SAC activities and decisions

PTA members should:

- Become informed about the SAC.
- Attend and participate in SAC meetings.
- Confer with leaders of SAC.
- Invite SAC members to attend PTA meetings and functions.
- Acquaint SAC members with the value of the broad PTA programs.

PTA observer at SAC meetings. The responsibilities of the observer include:

- Attending SAC meetings.
- Reporting to the PTA meetings.
- Involving the PTA in studies or topics on which the SAC is working.
- Requesting time at SAC meetings for PTA input.
- Reporting results of PTA studies to the SAC. (From the National Parent-Teacher Association)

### **Pinellas County Council of PTAs**

The Pinellas County Council of PTAs encourages all local units to be a part of their School Advisory Councils. While it is important that PTA and SAC remain two separate organizations, each with their own purposes, cooperation and communication between the two is very important. A liaison from the PTA may serve on the SAC as well as a liaison from the SAC serve as a member of the PTA board and report to their respective organizations. PTAs have long developed leadership among their officers and members. PTAs know how to get volunteers through recruitment. This can be a valuable resource to SACs when writing their bylaws, agendas, minutes and in getting the word out to the community. We encourage PTAs to plan a program at one of their general meetings to allow the SAC to present the school improvement plan to the general body. Communication and cooperation between these two organizations is vital to the success of educating our children and developing successful school improvement plans.



# Chapter IV

# School Improvement: How Do We Fit In?

- What is School Improvement and the School Improvement Cycle?
- School Improvement Process and Calendar
- Needs Assessment Process
- Developing Your School Improvement Plan
  - Integrated management
  - Financial resources
- Communicating and Deploying Your Plan
- Evaluating Your Plan

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## Resource Materials

- Accountability Criteria
- Data Interpretation/DOE School Report
- Template for School Improvement Plan
- Sample School Improvement Plans (Home Town School)
- Waiver Process and Request



# **What is School Improvement?**

School improvement is the continual process of making your school a place where students learn, develop and achieve to the very best of their ability, and where teachers can effectively stimulate and lead that learning process.

The purpose of a School Improvement Plan (SIP), like that of any other organizational plan, is to answer the questions:

- Where are we going?
- How will we get there?
- How will we know when we get there?

A written plan that answers those questions ensures that everyone involved in your school's success understands what your school's goals are, what actions you will take to achieve those goals and how you will know when you are succeeding. Developing a School Improvement Plan helps schools focus in two major ways: (1) Setting specific goals to raise student achievement aligned with state and district goals. (2) Creating action plans and strategies to implement the school's goals.

Each school must complete a School Improvement Plan each year, according to a timeline developed by the district to meet state deadlines. Each school's plan is evaluated by local district personnel and submitted to the state. The plan should be a document that drives the development and improvement of school practices. An effective plan will:

- Enable the school to be proactive in curriculum development and interpretation.
- Identify specific school needs for training or resources.
- Manage limited human and material resources more effectively.
- Identify the school's strengths, weaknesses and the needs of the school community.

The principal, SIP goal leaders, SAC representatives and teacher delegates will be invited to attend three SIP training sessions each year. These sessions keep each school up to speed on any state or district changes or requirements and allow district personnel to coach school teams through their planning process.

This chapter provides a general explanation of school improvement and the timeline to accomplish the steps towards completing the document. Each school customizes the process to meet the needs of its staff and School Advisory Council members.

## PDSA—A Classroom Application

Using the *Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle* to refine a system is similar to using the scientific method to make decisions.

### ***PLAN***

⇒ *Make a hypothesis about a cause and effect relationship, and figure out a way to test your hypothesis. Spend most of your time carefully planning this test so you will be sure you have found out what you want to know.*

Plan what you are going to do to improve learning in your classroom. What changes do you and your students think need to be made to cause improvement in the learning results? Spend as much time as possible researching and planning exactly what you want to do. For example, you might decide to begin paired repeated reading with a reading group.

### ***DO***

⇒ *Perform the test.*

Do what you planned on as small a scale as possible. Try it out with one group of students (one reading group, one class). This is in case you are wrong in your prediction! Collect data.

### ***STUDY***

⇒ *Gather and interpret the data to decide if your hypothesis correctly described the relationship.*

Study what happened. Did the improvements you wanted happen? Did the students reading scores improve? What does your data say?

### ***ACT***

⇒ *If you find your idea was correct, you can then go ahead and implement programs based on it. If it was not correct, change your idea, and start over!*

Act on what you find. If what you did resulted in your hoped-for improvement, expand it to include more students (implement it with another reading group) and refine it through another cycle. If not, change it and go through another cycle, or make a new plan. At any rate, continue to seek improvement by using the cycle again and again.

# Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is defined as the formal identification of the gaps between where we are now and where we want to be. Using state- and district-generated reports, the next step is the placement of the gaps in priority order and the selection of the gaps in highest priority for action and resolution by the school. The informal needs assessment results may be categorized for planning of training and resource allocation (i.e., technology, staff development, parent training, etc.).

A comprehensive needs assessment is a systematic effort to acquire an accurate and thorough picture of strengths and weaknesses of an entire school community. School goals are driven by state and district goals and corresponding reporting of test results, such as FCAT and Florida Writes. Schools also use informal data collection such as surveys to determine needs.

The first step is deciding what a school will focus on in its School Improvement Plan. Needs assessments combine an official review of test scores and a more informal review of programs and procedures used at the school.

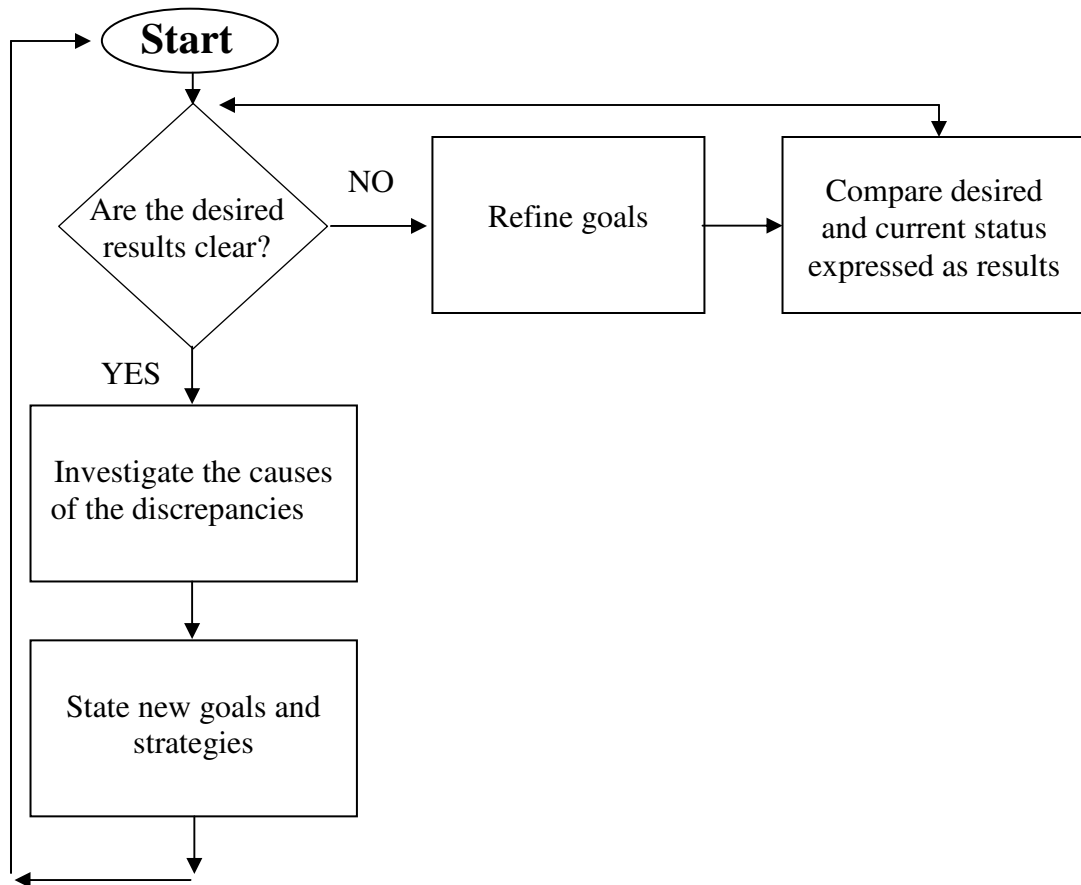
An annual review of the School Improvement Plan, using the most current data, is conducted to determine strengths and weaknesses of programs, to identify unmet program and student needs, to serve as a basis for establishing priorities and to make recommendations for the (re)allocation of educational resources.

*A need is the gap between what is and what should be.*

The steps of the needs assessment process are to:

- Define the two methods of needs assessment: (1) the official data review and (2) the informal customer surveys.
- Learn how to find existing data.
- Learn when it is important to gather more data and from whom.
- Participate in hands-on data analysis.

# Needs Assessment Process



## Developing Your School Improvement Plan

*NOTE: A predesigned template for the actual School Improvement Plan (SIP) document is provided for schools. The template contains all of the required components and saves the schools the extra time needed to design an SIP format. Although not required, most schools use the district-designed template. The template is accessed through PLACES (under C & I Administration).*

A School Improvement Plan must address the eight state goals, the state student performance standards and the three strategic directives of Pinellas County Schools and include such other items as specified by the School Board.

The School Improvement Plan should:

- Be based on a needs assessment.
- Include individual school goals.

- Identify indicators of student progress
- Identify strategies for reaching goals. (What new strategies, policies and practices will be used to reach the state and local goals?)
- Include evaluation procedures, including adequate measurement of individual student performance.

The process of the School Improvement Plan should include the following steps:

- Review the purpose of a school improvement plan.
- Describe the steps of effective planning.
- Write measurable goals and strategies for school improvement.
- Examine adequate progress and evaluation measurements for school improvement planning.
- Demonstrate effective planning and resource allocation for strategy implementation.
- Examine ways to communicate the school improvement plan with the school community.

## **Integrated Management System in School Improvement**

*NOTE: The integrated management system is a structured approach to ensuring that quality principles are systematically and consistently applied to the operation of our organization. Such a system links the essential components for a high-performing organization so it operates at maximum efficiency. The district has customized the integrated management system into the school improvement planning process.*

### **School's demographic profile (Who are we?)**

- enrollment
- percentage of free/reduced lunches
- school community diversity
- staff diversity
- program composition
- service area
- major facilities and technologies used
- key customer requirements
- key partnerships
- unique factors

### **Leadership (Who's coaching this team anyway?)**

Describe how leadership has been instrumental in monitoring, communicating, evaluating and involving others in the school improvement plan and its deployment.

- Identify the leaders and their roles in planning and deployment.
- Describe how leaders have:
  - worked with others in the school to promote the mission statement.
  - taken an active role in the development and deployment of the improvement plan.
  - modeled the use of quality tools and principles in the development and implementation of the plan.
  - allocated resources for development and deployment of the plan.
  - signaled strong commitment to the new way of work required to drive improvement results.
  - involved all stakeholders.

**Goals — Strategic Development Process** (What are we planning?)

Identify district goals that the school needs to improve upon.

- Describe how the school used customer and district data to determine planning priorities.
- State how your short-term (and long-term) school goals are contributing and aligned to results measures.
- Describe how the school evaluates its planning process and makes improvements.

**Aim — Customer Focus and Satisfaction** (Why does my school exist?)

Describe the school's operational relationship to the district strategic directions.

- Analyze the district strategic directions and identify how your school is driving improved results at the district level.
- Identify the 3–4 things that your school has identified as improvement areas to have satisfied customers.
- Identify data that show levels of customer satisfaction by groups — students, parents, teachers.

**Information Systems — Information and Analysis** (What's happening? How do we know?)

Describe how data and information are gathered and maintained to support the accomplishments of the plan.

- Describe how decisions about what data to collect are guided by mission, strategic directions, school improvement goals and customer requirements.
- Describe how data is readily available to assist those who need it to make decisions about improving performance.

## **Human Resources — Human Resource Excellence** (What do people need to do their job effectively?)

Describe how human resources have been developed to support new or improved processes.

- Describe plans and action steps implemented to:
  - recognize staff members and volunteers who contributed to the development of the improvement plan.
  - orient new employees to the goals and strategies in the improvement plan.
  - support the new or improved processes (include training, involvement on teams, recognition, reporting of progress).

## **Processes — Process Management** (How are we doing it?)

Identify school processes that drive improved district results and school goals.

- Describe the process for designing key instructional support and supplier processes to meet customer requirements.
- Describe how the learning processes are systematically analyzed, reviewed and adjusted for improvement.
- Describe how support processes are systematically analyzed, reviewed and adjusted for improvement (Plan-Do-Study-Act).

## **Results — Performance Results Measures** (Are we reaching our goals? How do we know?)

Analyze district results measures and determine the degree to which the school is currently contributing to those results (benchmarking).

- Summarize the school's current levels and performance relative to comparable schools.
- Summarize the school's current trends in performance relative to district strategic directions and school improvement goals results as compared to high-performing schools.

## **Financial Resources**

Schools in Pinellas County now have increased flexibility in the use of their funds under the recently implemented school-based budgeting system. In addition, local schools receive school improvement allocations of \$5.00 per full-time student to use in the development, implementation and evaluation of school improvement objectives. A great deal of flexibility is being given to schools in the use of that money. The SAC should ensure that the use of SIP funds is aligned to the highest priorities of the school as listed in the School Improvement Plan.

Funds earmarked for school improvement in school budget allocations are shown on the school-based budget report. School improvement fund expenditures may include:

- Conducting needs assessments for school improvement plans.
- Developing school improvement plans.
- Training activities related to school improvement plans.
- Parental involvement activities related to school improvement plans.
- Implementing school improvement plans.
- Release time/substitutes for school staff members to participate in school improvement plan-related activities.

As with other district money, Florida Statutes, State Board of Education rules, school board policies and other district guidelines govern the use of school improvement funds. Any unused school improvement funds for the current fiscal year can be carried over to the school improvement budget for use in the following year(s). Capital improvements are not an allowable expenditure of school improvement money.

Money also has been allocated by the state for educational technology and related training. This is used for school technology incentive awards to enhance the use of technology in classroom instruction and further the aims of Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability. To be eligible for a technology incentive award, the principal and SAC of a school must jointly submit a proposal describing how award funds will be used to increase the use of technology in instruction in a manner that is consistent with the approved School Improvement Plan.

## School Improvement Funds

### Guidelines For Use Of School Improvement Funds

- A. The School Advisory Council (SAC) shall be involved in the development of and shall approve the expenditures of school improvement funds. The principal will serve as fund authorizer (authorized signature on TDE's, purchase requisitions, etc.). The principal cannot override an expenditure decision made by the SAC.
- B. All expenditures must be in compliance with state statute, district policy and procedures.  
NOTE: Any exception to statute, policy or procedures is expected to have been approved through the formal school improvement waiver process (a sample is included in the resource section). Please contact your area superintendent for clarification, if needed.
- C. Expenditures clearly tied to your School Improvement Plan for the following activities are allowed:
  1. Conducting needs assessments for school improvement.

2. Developing school improvement plans.
  3. Training activities related to school improvement.
  4. Implementing school improvement plans.
- D. Travel incurred in relation to any of the above-mentioned activities will be reimbursed in compliance with school board policy.
- E. Any purchase of food or food-related items must be for the purpose of supporting a student curricular objective. Such a purchase must be referenced in the School Improvement Plan, as documented in the plan itself or by specific minutes of the School Advisory Council (SAC). A statement of justification for the purchase must be submitted to the appropriate area superintendent and the purchase approved in advance.
- F. Any other purchase not included in the School Improvement Plan that the SAC deems necessary for the implementation of the plan must be documented by specific SAC minutes approving the expenditure of funds for the purchase.

### Other School Funds

During the 1998 legislative session, it was decided that by the year 1999-2000, each SAC will assist in the preparation of the school's annual budget. The term "assist" shall be defined as to give advice to. The SAC bylaws should include a working definition of assisting with annual budgets.

## Communicating And Deploying Your Plan

*School improvement is a journey,  
not a destination.*

After the School Improvement Plan has been written, the plan is distributed by the school to members of the school staff, district personnel, parents and community members. The plan should be a living document and shouldn't just sit on a shelf. This is the time when the SAC and the principal decide on **deployment** strategies and ongoing updates regarding deployment. The principal and other appropriate persons take every reasonable opportunity (for example, by means of newsletters, reports and meetings) to communicate the contents and deployment strategies of the School Improvement Plan to staff, students, parents and community.

The written plan is not an end in itself; it is a communication tool and serves as a blueprint for the future of the school and improved student success.

## Suggested Communication Strategies

### **Advertising:**

- Direct mail
- Electronic messages
- Bill inserts

### **Promotions:**

- Proclamations
- School fairs
- Social events

### **Publicity:**

- Newsletters
- Brochures
- Feature stories
- News releases
- Public service announcements
- Talk shows
- Web page

### **Public Relations:**

- Open house
- Parent nights

### **Direct Contact:**

- Town meeting
- Civic clubs

## Evaluating Your Plan

Evaluation of the School Improvement Plan should occur in three phases, considering district and state deadlines for submission.

The **first evaluation** should take place after the plan has been written but before it has been implemented (deployed). It should focus on these questions:

- Does the plan address all the requirements of the legislation?
- Were all the steps in the planning process completed?
- Does the plan address high priority needs?
- Does the plan represent an attempt to significantly improve the academic performance of the school's students?

This initial evaluation can be done by members of the School Advisory Council; however, the district has a review team evaluate all plans prior to submitting them to the School Board.

The second **evaluation**, which occurs as the plan is being implemented, should focus on:

- Are the action plan strategies being accomplished as planned?
- Are the action plan timelines set by the SAC being met?

Dates for this phase should be set in advance for checking the progress of the plan.

The **third** evaluation occurs after the plan has been fully implemented and should focus on:

- Was the plan effective?
- Were unmet needs identified for inclusion in the next School Improvement Plan?



# ATTACHMENTS



**Attachment A**

**Sample Request for School Improvement Funds**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Classes being taught at this time \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grade level \_\_\_\_\_

Request \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**School Improvement Plan**

Goal # \_\_\_\_\_ Process \_\_\_\_\_

Classes being taught at this time \_\_\_\_\_

How does this request align with the above goal and process?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Requested Amount # \_\_\_\_\_

Date presented to School Advisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_

Approved Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
SAC Chair Signature



**Attachment B**

**Monthly Budget Report**

	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Spent</b>
A. CRISS Training/Similar Training (The monies listed provided training for 25 teachers to receive the CRISS training.)	\$4000.00	\$2000.00
B. Research and Visitation (These monies cover the costs for substitutes and teacher travel expenses)	\$3000.00	\$1050.00
C. Media Center Needs (These monies cover the costs for technology needs)	\$1000.00	(\$0)
D. Miscellaneous (These monies would provide printing and supplies)	\$ 700.00	\$500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,700.00</b>	<b>\$3550.00</b>



## Attachment C

### **Goal A Highest Student Achievement**

#### Budget Amount

\$2,000.00	Curriculum Alignment with Standards
\$3,000.00	Technology Deployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Testing Materials</li><li>- Special Needs/At-Risk Students</li><li>- Teacher Training</li></ul>
\$2,000.00	Underachieving Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Math and Reading Screening Tests</li><li>- Academic Progress to Feeder Schools</li><li>- Career Planning - Critical Thinking Curriculum</li></ul>
\$1,500.00	Student Recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Dean's List/Honor Roll</li><li>- Principal's Brunch</li><li>- Student Leadership</li><li>- Attendance and Achievement Awards</li></ul>
\$1,000.00	Attractors - Investigation & Materials
\$1,500.00	Parental Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ninth Grade Orientation</li><li>- Back-to-School Night</li><li>- Positive Communication</li><li>- School-to-Career</li></ul>
\$2,000.00	School-wide Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- CRISS</li><li>- Cross-Curricular</li><li>- Kagan</li><li>- Multi-Cultural</li></ul>

(continued on back)

## **Goal B Effective and Efficient Operation**

### Budget Amount

\$500.00	Partnerships
\$500.00	Mentoring
\$4,000.00	Classroom Learning System
\$500.00	Mentoring Programs
\$300.00	Staff Training Survey (PDP) - Technology - Teaching and Learning - Interpersonal Skills

## **Goal C Safe Learning Environment**

### Budget Amount

\$4,250.00	School-Based Programs to Reduce Suspensions and Referrals - Zero-tolerance tardy policy - Photo ID system - Peer Mediation - Saturday School - On-Campus Intervention Program - Classroom Management Plan Alignment
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### Budget Summary

Goal A	\$13,000.00
Goal B	\$5,800.00
Goal C	\$4,250.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$23,000.00</b>

Date Approved by SAC \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment D**

**School Improvement  
Plan Expenditures**

	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Spent</b>
• Reading/Writing Activities	\$2500.00	\$82.50
Assessments                      \$82.50		
• Mathematics Activities	\$1700.00	\$75.40
Assessments                      \$75.40		
• Partnership Activities	\$1240.00	\$981.39
Student handbooks              \$750.39		
Postage                              \$231.00		
• Support Activities	\$5980.00	\$630.00
SIP Training Planning Team \$90.00		
SQC Writing Team              \$420.00		
SIP Training (2 TDE's)        \$120.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,420.00</b>	<b>\$1769.29</b>

## **School Improvement Funds**

### **Sample #1 for Bylaws:**

1. School Improvement Funds, appropriated through the School Improvement Plan (SIP) are considered encumbered upon adoption of the School Improvement Plan by the SAC and School Board. However, expenditures of these funds require a detailed budget be presented to the SAC prior to the actual use of the funds. Additionally, if the funds allocated by the SAC are insufficient, a request for additional funds, supported by documentation, may be presented to SAC for approval at any time (see attachment A).
2. For expenditures of School Improvement funds other than those appropriated through the SIP, the approval procedures will be as follows:
  - a. Up to \$150 at the discretion of the Co-Chair or Principal
  - b. From \$150 to \$250 at the discretion of the SAC Steering Committee
  - c. More than \$250 requires approval of the SAC
  - d. \$50 per staff member for professional Development (i.e., professional conferences)
3. SAC will receive a written monthly summary of all expenditures (see attachment B)
4. Each SAC can develop a process for presenting expenditures. All expenditures must be aligned to SIP processes.

### **Sample #2 for Bylaws:**

In September, the School Improvement budget is developed in relationship to each of the School Improvement goals. Expenditures proposed must be linked to the accomplishment of the stated goals (see attachment C).

### **Sample #3 for Bylaws:**

The School Improvement budget is submitted to the School Advisory Council at the end of the school year for approval for the next school year. Each month the School Improvement budget is presented to the School Advisory Council to review the expenditures to date and make adjustments as necessary (see attachment D).