

# **Florida Department of Education**

## **School Advisory Councils Basic Information for SAC Members**

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# Welcome

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As a member of a School Advisory Council (SAC), you are a very important person. You and your fellow council members are entrusted



- x Assess the need for improvement at your school by using district, state and federal goals as a guide and by reviewing student performance data.
- x Put the school's needs in priority order.
- x Identify problems and barriers that underlie the needed improvements and their causes.
- x Identify and evaluate possible solutions and develop strategies---specific "how-to" steps---to accomplish the needed improvement.
- x Specify what will be done, when it will be done, by whom, and what resources are needed.
- x Specify precisely what results (outcomes) you expect to achieve and how they will be measured.
- x Specify which indicators of success will serve as "adequate progress" for strategies in the plan.
- x Decide how you are going to measure success.

This work can be accomplished in various formats ---work groups, subcommittees, task forces---and may involve people in addition to SAC members from the school or community.

One of the important parts of this process is to not let your thinking be limited by the way things have been done in the past. A primary reason for the School Advisory Council is to encourage innovation. Though some education practices persist because they are effective, many excellent ideas fell by the wayside in the past because they no longer fit existing school system practices.

The intent of the School Improvement and Accountability legislation is to encourage and use strategies that work, even when they are different from what has been done in the past.

Communicate with other SACs to share ideas and support each other. You might especially want to talk with those SACs in your school's "feeder pattern" (elementary, middle and high schools that share the same student populations).

There is no one "right way" to do your school improvement plan.

Remember that you are charged with working on what will enable your school and your students to be the best they can be.

Once the plan is developed, you need to provide an opportunity, such as a meeting at the school or a community center, to allow the public and the school community an opportunity to review the plan and offer input. Then the plan is submitted to your District School Board for approval.

The plan will be evaluated, updated and revised each year, so your school will have additional opportunities to incorporate new ideas or work on areas that were not a top priority this year.

Each Fall, the school will distribute a report to the public on how well the school did last school year and what progress was made.

## **Florida's Open Government Law**

Florida government at all levels operates under the principle that the public has the right to know what its government is doing.

Therefore, under the Florida Sunshine Law and the state public records law, work conducted by public officials on behalf of the citizens, and records of that work, must be available for inspection by any interested person.

As a member of a School Advisory Council you are, in effect, doing work for the public, even if you are a volunteer.

This means your SAC's work, its plan, the information developed and/or used in writing the plan and your meetings all must be open and accessible to anyone who is interested, for whatever reason.

The vast majority of public school records and actions, with few exceptions such as labor negotiations, student records and some personnel matters, have long been public under these laws.

If you have special concerns or a specific question arises, your school principal should consult the school board attorney, who customarily handles these issues.

The Sunshine Law aside, the basic philosophy of school improvement and accountability legislation would have us involve and inform all stakeholders as much as possible in the development of a school improvement plan.

## **Your Partners in School Improvement**

### **Your School District:**

to offer your team. There is also a school improvement contact person in your district. This person can be reached at the main school district office or the Department of Education can provide you with this name and contact information.

### **Florida Department of Education:**

This statewide agency offers technical assistance and resources to help local schools develop and implement their school improvement plans.

### **Information Resources**

In doing your job as a SAC member, you will need information and data. This information is available from many sources, including:

- x Your school principal
  
- x Your school faculty and non-teaching staff members
  
- x Surveys of parent, students and faculty at your school
  
- x Reports about specific characteristics of your school and its students available from your district school board and online websites
  
- x Budget and program information available from your district school board
  
- x Students at your school
  
- x Your School Resource Officer (SRO) or, if you don't have a SRO program, the law enforcement agencies that protect your school
  
- x Specialists who work at your school such as school nurses, social workers, guidance counselors, media specialists, technology specialists and others
  
- x Your school PTA/PSA/PTO and your district PTA council
  
- x Community groups and agencies that are actively concerned with the welfare of children and youth
  
- x Florida Department of Education and your district websites