



Cherokee County
School District

HANDBOOK
FOR
SCHOOL COUNCILS
BY-LAWS AND GUIDELINES

Cherokee County School District
www.cherokeek12.net

Revised July 2021

SCHOOL COUNCIL CODE OF ETHICS

Council members shall follow Georgia's Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics for Educators, 505-6-.01 effective June 15, 2015, as modified. A copy of the code of ethics, as modified, is provided below.

THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Introduction

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards which represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession, and defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction.

Definitions

“Educator” is a teacher, school or Cherokee County School System administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate.

For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, “educator” also refers to local school council members, paraprofessionals, aides and substitute teachers.

“Student” is any individual enrolled in the state's public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual age 18 or under.

Standards

Standard 1: Legal Compliance - An educator should abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes the commission or conviction of a felony or misdemeanor offense, including DUI/BUI, but excluding minor traffic

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violations such as speeding, following too closely, improper lane change, etc. As used herein, “conviction” includes a finding or verdict of guilt, a plea of guilty or a plea of *nolo contendere*.

Standard 2: Conduct with Students - An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: committing any act of child abuse, including physical and emotional abuse; committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment; committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act; committing any act of sexual harassment; soliciting, encouraging or consummating a romantic or inappropriate relationship with a student (including dating a student) whether written, verbal or physical; and furnishing alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs - An educator should refrain from the abuse of alcohol or drugs during the course of service on the council. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using or consuming alcohol.

Standard 4: Honesty - An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional service on the council. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting or omitting professional qualifications, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award and employment history; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information regarding compliance reports submitted to federal, state and other governmental agencies; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting or omitting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel; falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting or omitting reasons for absences or leaves; and falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting or omitting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation.

Standard 5: Public Funds and Property - An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: misusing public or school-related funds or property; failing to account for funds collected from students or parents; and submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay.

Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct - An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons or businesses when accepting gifts,

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gratuities, favors and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Standard 7: Confidential Information - An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student records, unless disclosure is required or permitted by law. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to unauthorized sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, personal confidences, health and medical information, family status and/or income and assessment/testing results.

Standard 8: Abandonment of Council Responsibilities - An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations of service as a member of the local school council. Unethical conduct includes failure of a council member to meet the requirements of accountability.

Standard 9: Professional Conduct - An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards. Unethical conduct is any conduct that seriously impairs the council member's ability to function in his or her council position or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline or morals of students (inappropriate language, physical altercations, etc.).

Reporting

Council members are required to report to the local school council a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics by members of the council.

Disciplinary Action

The local school council is empowered to remove council members.

School Council By-laws and Guidelines

HB 1187, SECTION 10. ARTICLE 4A. O.C.G.A. 20-2-85, *et seq.*

Name

The name of this school council shall be the _____ hereinafter referred to as the school council organized under the authority of State law and the Board of Education.

Preamble and Purpose

The role of the school council is to bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation, solve difficult education problems, improve academic achievement, provide support for teachers and administrators and bring parents into the school-based decision-making process. The school council will advise and assist the principal in facilitating the development and monitoring of the progress of the School Improvement Plan. School councils will operate under established administrative guidelines as determined by the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000, O.C.G.A. 20-2-85.

The establishment of school councils is intended to help local boards of education develop and nurture participation, bring parents and the community together with teachers and school administrators to create a better understanding of and mutual respect for each other's concerns and share ideas for school improvement. School councils shall be reflective of the school community.

The management and control of public schools shall be the responsibility of local boards of education, and the school leader shall be the principal. School councils shall provide advice, recommendations and assistance and represent the community of parents and businesses. Each member of the council, as a community representative, shall be accorded the respect and attention deserving of such election.

Training

The Georgia Department of Education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and to assist school council members in the performance of their duties. Such program shall address:

- (1) the organization of councils;
- (2) their purpose and responsibilities;
- (3) applicable laws, rules, regulations and meeting procedures;

- (4) important State and local Cherokee County School System program requirements; and
- (5) shall provide a model school council organization plan.

The training program shall be offered to school council members at least twice per school year, except that this program shall be offered during the month of July or September should there be members of the school council with a term commencing on July 01 or October 1 who have not previously received this training.

School Council Membership

Membership on the council shall be open to teachers, parents and business representatives selected from all businesses that are designated school business partners. Any member may withdraw from the council by delivering to the council a written resignation and submitting a copy to the secretary of the council or school principal. Should school council members determine that a member of the council is no longer active in the council as defined by the by-laws of the council, the council may, by a vote of quorum of the council, withdraw such person's membership status, effective as of a date determined by the council.

Members of the council shall serve for a term of two years. The terms of the council members shall be staggered. If eligible for membership, council members may serve more than one term.

The property and business of the council shall be managed by a minimum of seven school council members of whom a majority shall constitute a quorum. The number of the school council members shall be specified in the by-laws. School council members must be individuals who are 18 years of age or older. Members of the school council shall include:

- (1) A number of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students, so that such parents or guardians make up a majority of the council and at least two of whom shall be business persons. Parent council members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

An employee of the local Cherokee County School System may serve as a parent representative on the council of a school in which his or her child is enrolled if such employee works at a different school.

A parent of a child assigned or enrolled at an alternative program (i.e., iGrad, ACE Academy) does qualify for election as a parent in the home school where their child would attend.

While terms of office are for two years, parents or guardians of any grade-level child enrolled in the school are eligible to vote and hold office, regardless of whether or not their child may graduate from the school in one year or less.

School Board members, as parents or businesspersons, are disqualified from serving on school councils but are allowed to vote as a parent from an electing body.

- (2) At least two certificated teachers, excluding any personnel employed in administrative positions, who are employed at least four of the six school segments at the school. Teachers who have resigned but are currently employed are not eligible to vote and be elected as a teacher representative.
- (3) School Principal, and
- (4) Other members as specified in the council's by-laws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school related organizations

Other business persons from the local business community may serve on the council and shall be selected by the other members of the school council.

Vacancy on Council

The office of school council member shall be automatically vacated:

- (1) If a member resigns;
- (2) If the person holding the office is removed as a member by an action of the council; or
- (3) If a member no longer meets the qualifications specified by law.

An election within the electing body for a replacement to fill the remainder of an unexpired term shall be held within 30 days, unless there are 90 calendar days or less remaining in the term in which case the vacancy shall remain unfilled.

Meeting Notice and Location

All meetings of the council shall be held at the school in a location determined by the principal. The council shall meet a minimum of four times annually, at the call of the chairperson, or at the request of a majority of the members of the council. Notice by mail shall be sent to school council members at least seven days prior to a meeting of the council. School councils shall be subject to Chapter 14 of Title 50, relating to open and public meetings, in the same manner as local boards of education. There can be no meetings of school councils without the required notice. Council Meeting notices will be displayed in the front office of the school and on the school's website.

Councils may meet during normal school hours and before or after school hours. School councils may notify the media of all dates, times and locations of council meetings for the entire school year, July 01 through June 30, with additional notice to media for cancellations, date/time/location changes and called meetings.

It is the responsibility of the school council member serving as secretary to maintain a written record of compliance with this notification requirement. Additionally, the council secretary shall provide advance notification, in writing, to the school community of teachers and parents of any and all school council meetings.

Quorum and Voting Requirement

Each member of the council is authorized to exercise one vote. *Proxy votes are not allowed. Voting members must be present to vote.*

A quorum comprised of four council members must be present in order to conduct official council business. At all meetings of the council every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum. The adoption of by-laws or changes thereto requires majority vote.

Remuneration

Members of the council shall not receive remuneration to serve on the council or its committees.

Electing Bodies, Election Method, Ballots and Posting of Elections and Meetings

After providing public notice at least two weeks before the meeting of each electing body, the principal of each school shall call a meeting of electing bodies during the month of May or September each year for the purpose of selecting members of the school council.

The electing body for the parent members shall consist of all parents and guardians eligible to serve as a parent member of the school council.

The electing body for the teacher members shall consist of all certificated personnel eligible to serve as a teacher member of the school council.

Election Method/Procedures

Nominations shall be accepted by the principal from members within the electing body prior to the actual voting meeting. One vote shall be taken with the two highest vote recipients being elected to serve on the school council. Where two individuals tie with the highest number of votes, both shall serve on the council, provided two council positions are open. If only one position on the council is

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open, then subsequent votes are required until one single individual emerges with the highest vote. Teachers/Parents must be present and qualified to vote. A person does not have to be present at the time of the vote to be elected to the school council.

Election method/procedures for other members shall be: the principal or designee shall recruit eligible students, staff and representatives of school-related organizations who will be selected as school council members by majority vote by the school council members.

Election Ballots: Ballots shall be printed in English and Spanish. All ballots, used and unused, shall be retained by the school principal for safekeeping following council elections.

Local School Council By-laws

The school council shall adopt the by-laws and guidelines included herein and such additional by-laws and guidelines as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the council. The adoption of by-laws or changes thereto requires majority vote. The by-laws adopted by local school councils shall not be inconsistent with the language or intent of the *Handbook for School Councils: By-laws and Guidelines of the Cherokee County School District*, adopted May 2000, and thereafter as revised.

Immunity

The school council shall have the same immunity as the local board of education in all matters directly related to the functions of the council.

Officers and Duties

The officers of the council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the council, other than the chairperson, shall be elected by the school council at the first meeting of the council following the election of school council members; provided, however, that the chairperson shall be a parent member. The officers of the council shall hold office concurrently with the term of members of the school council.

The Chairperson

The chairperson of the council is a parent member. The school principal shall have the following duties pertaining to school council activities:

- (1) Cause to be created a school council by convening the appropriate bodies to select school council members; setting the initial agenda, meeting time, and location; and notifying all school council members of the same;

- (2) At the discretion of the principal and as appropriate, speak for and represent the council in all school council matters before the Superintendent of Schools and the Cherokee County Board of Education;
- (3) Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the Superintendent of Schools and inform the school council of responses or actions of the Superintendent of Schools;
- (4) Review the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and school operations plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations and approval;
- (5) Develop the agenda for each meeting of the council after taking into consideration suggestions of council members and the urgency of school matters. An item may be added to the agenda at the request of three or more council members.

The Vice-Chairperson

The vice chairperson shall, in the absence or disability of the chairperson, preside and conduct the meeting.

The Secretary

The secretary shall attend all meetings, act as clerk of the council, and be responsible for recording all votes and minutes of all proceedings in the books to be kept for that purpose. The secretary shall give or cause to be given notice of all meetings of the school council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the school council.

Accountability

The members of the council are accountable to the constituents they serve and shall:

- (1) Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues; and
- (2) Regularly participate in council meetings; and
- (3) Participate in information and training programs; and
- (4) Act as a link between the school council and the community; and
- (5) Encourage the participation of parents and others within the school community; and
- (6) Work to improve student achievement and performance.

Minutes

The minutes of the council shall be made available to the public, for inspection at the school office within two working days (Monday-Friday), and shall be provided to the council members, each of whom shall receive a copy of such minutes within 20 days following each council meeting.

A copy of council meeting minutes shall be forwarded to the Chief Operations Officer within three working days (Monday-Friday).

School councils shall be subject to Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50, relating to the inspection of public records, in the same manner as local boards of education.

At all meetings of the council every question shall be determined by a majority vote of members present, representing a quorum.

Term of Office

The term of office of all council members shall begin on July 01 and end on June 30 or begin on October 1 and end on September 30 (depending on whether the election is held in May or September). Members of the council shall serve for a term of two years, except as modified herein.

Committees, Study Groups and Task Forces

The council may appoint committees, study groups or task forces for such purposes as it deems helpful and may utilize existing or new school advisory groups. Such requests shall be facilitated by the Superintendent of Schools to ensure that all employees' statutorily required responsibilities and work, implementation of school board policies and school district responsibilities are not unduly interrupted or abridged in compliance with such requests.

Board of Education and School Council Operational Agreements

The local board of education shall provide all information not specifically made confidential by law, including school site and expenditure budget information and site average class sizes by grade as requested or as required by state law or state board rule. The local board shall also designate an employee of the Cherokee County School District to attend school council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to questions the school council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board. Such requests shall be facilitated by the Superintendent of Schools to ensure that all employees' statutorily required responsibilities and work, implementation of school board policies and school district responsibilities are not unduly interrupted or abridged in compliance with such requests.

The central administration shall be responsive to requests for information from a school council.

The Cherokee County Board of Education shall receive all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, such as the School Improvement Plan as follows:

- (1) Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports/recommendations.
- (2) Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven days prior to such local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a school council report, such as the School improvement Plan. Such requests shall be processed in the same manner as Agenda Preparation Group items.
- (3) The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report or information.

After initial receipt of a school council item, the Superintendent of Schools is responsible for placing school council item(s) on a board agenda within the sixty (60) calendar day requirement. The local board of education shall respond to each recommendation of the school council within 60 calendar days after the request appears on the printed agenda for a regular school board meeting.

Scope of Council Responsibilities

(A) School councils are advisory bodies.

(B) Councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education on any matter, including but not limited to, the following:

- (1) School board policies;
- (2) School Improvement Plans;
- (3) Curriculum and Assessment;
- (4) Report cards issued or audits of the school as conducted by the State of Georgia Office of Educational Accountability;
- (5) Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the council to describe the academic progress, services, awards, interventions, environment, and other such data as the council deems appropriate;
- (6) School budget priorities, including school capital improvement plans;
- (7) School-community communication strategies;
- (8) Methods of involving parents and the community;
- (9) Extracurricular activities in the school;
- (10) School-based and community services;
- (11) Community use of school facilities;
- (12) Student discipline and attendance;
- (13) Reports from the school principal regarding progress toward the school's student achievement goals, including progress within specific grade levels and subject areas and by school personnel; and
- (14) The method and specifications for the delivery of early intervention services or other appropriate services for underachieving students

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In filling a school principal vacancy, the school council is to annually submit to the superintendent a list of preferred personal qualities, professional abilities, and leadership styles that appropriate candidates should possess.

Article XIX

Parliamentary Authority

Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the governing parliamentary authority for school councils in all cases applicable but not inconsistent with these by-laws.