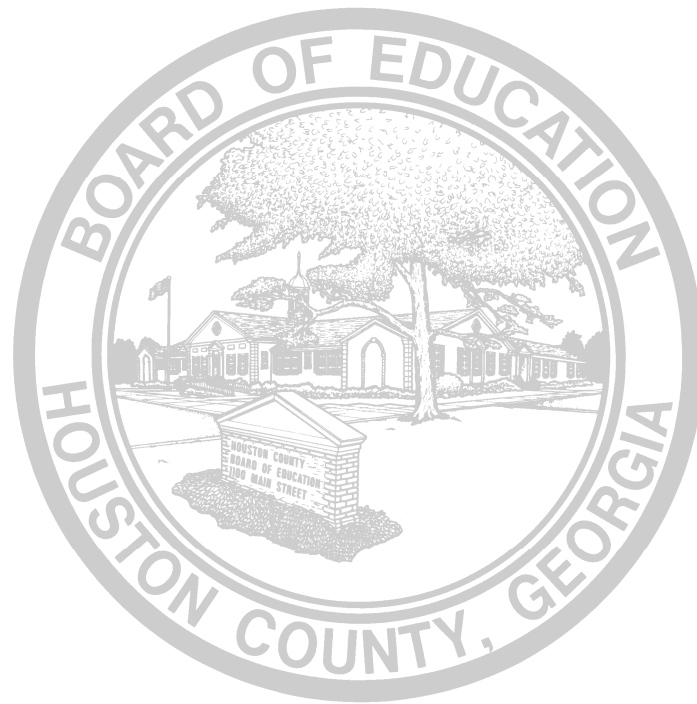


Russell Elementary SCHOOL COUNCIL HANDBOOK



BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES

Russell Elementary
Houston County School System
Adopted May 2001

Revised September 2010

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School Council Code of Ethics

School Council members shall follow Georgia’s Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics for Educators, as modified. A copy of the code of ethics, as modified, is provided below.

THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS and HOUSTON COUNTY 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 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 twelve or any individual between and including the ages of 3 and 17.

Standards

Standard 1: Criminal Acts – 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 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: Abuse of 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; engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, sex, national origin, religion, or disability; soliciting, encouraging, or consummating a romantic or inappropriate relationship with a student (including dating a student) whether written, verbal, or physical; and furnishing tobacco, 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 use of alcohol or drugs during the course of professional 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: Misrepresentation or Falsification – 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, misrepresenting, omitting or erroneously reporting professional qualifications, criminal history, college or professional learning credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history; falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting or erroneously reporting information regarding compliance reports submitted to federal, state, and other governmental agencies; falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting or erroneously reporting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel; falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting or erroneously reporting reasons for absences or leaves; and falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting or erroneously reporting 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; submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay; co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; using public or school-related property (including the use of computers, facilities, equipment or property for non-school or non-system use) without the approval of the local board of education.

Standard 6: Improper Remunerative Conduct – An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, 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 Contract – 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. See Article XIII, Accountability.

Standard 9: Failure to Make a Required Report – An educator should file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes the failure to make a required report as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner.

Standard 10: 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

School 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. Specifically, see: Article IV, School Council Membership.

Russell Elementary SCHOOL COUNCIL BYLAWS AND GUIDELINES O.C.G.A 20-2-85

Article I Name

Russell Elementary School Council

The name of this school council shall be the Local School Council hereinafter referred to as the school council organized under the authority of the state law and the Houston County Board of Education.

Article II Preamble and Purpose

Recognizing the need to improve communication and participation of parents and the community in the management and operation of local schools, the General Assembly of Georgia and the Houston County Board of Education believe parent and community support is critical to the success of students and schools. The intent of these bylaws and guidelines is to bring communities and schools closer together in a spirit of cooperation.

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 shall 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.

Article III Operational Date

By October 1, 2003, a school council shall be operational in each of the schools in the Houston County School District.

The board of education shall provide a training program to assist schools in forming a school council and 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 school system program requirements; and
- (5) shall provide a model school council organization plan.

Additional training programs shall be offered to school council members annually. The State Board of Education shall develop and make available a model school council training program.

Article IV School Council Membership

Membership on the **Russell Elementary School 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 bylaws of the council, the council may, by a majority vote, withdraw such person's membership status, effective as of a date determined by the council.

Failure to attend 3 consecutive meetings whether in the same year or between two years would declare a member inactive and therefore eligible for replacement.

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 council members shall be specified in the council's bylaws. If the number of council members exceeds seven, the number of parent members and teacher members must be equal. Members of the school council shall include:

- (1) At least two parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, excluding employees who are parents or guardians of such students. Parent or guardian council members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

Note A: An employee of the local 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.

Note B: While terms of office are staggered, parents or guardians of any grade-level child enrolled in the school are eligible to vote and hold office, as long as the student is enrolled in that school.

Note C: 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.

Note D: There is no prohibition in the law for a qualifying person to serve on two or more school councils, where qualified.

(2) Two business persons;

Note A: The official list of Partners in Education (PIE) shall be provided to each school principal and to the board of education by the Houston County Schools Director of Community and School Relations. It is from this official list that businesspersons shall be selected.

Note B: There is no requirement that the businessperson's business be located within the school's attendance zone.

Note C: Church personnel, military personnel, and governmental personnel do not meet the eligibility criteria for "businessperson". Businesspersons must be actively engaged in commerce to be eligible.

(3) 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. Teacher council members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

Note A: Teacher is defined as a regular classroom teacher, excluding media personnel, counselors, and itinerant or part-time teachers who serve less than four segments at the school.

Note B: Teachers who have resigned but are currently employed are eligible to vote and be elected as a teacher representative. Upon the effective date of the resignation, the teacher is disqualified to vote or hold office on the council.

(4) The school principal; and

Note A: The school principal is automatically appointed to the council. No election is required. The school principal holds office by virtue of his/her position as principal.

(5) Other members as specified in the council's bylaws, such as, but not limited to, students, staff, and representatives of school-related organizations. Selection procedures for these members and the business members shall be specified in the council's bylaws.

With the exception of the principal and the business representatives, members shall be elected by, and from among, the group they represent.

Conflict of interest issues generally do not apply to council members because councils are advisory in nature, as opposed to boards of education which are decision-making bodies.

Number of School Council Members will consist of a minimum of four with no more than six parents members, two teacher members, and two business partners. There will be no other members of the Russell Elementary School Council.

Article V Vacancy on Council

The office of school council member shall be automatically vacated:

- (1) If a member shall resign;
- (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 in the 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.

Article VI Meeting Notice and Location

All meetings of the school council shall be open to the public. The council shall meet at least four times annually and the number of meetings shall be specified in the council's bylaws. The council shall also meet 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 and shall include the date, time, and location of the meeting. 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.

Russell Elementary School Council will have a minimum of four meetings per academic school year.

Note A: Councils may meet during normal school hours and before or after school hours, but in all cases must be announced to the public at least twenty-four hours in advance.

Note B: Councils will notify the Director of Community and School Relations who in turn will notify the media of meeting dates and times.

Note C: Because the law requires notice by mail to be sent to school council members at least seven days prior to a meeting of the council, there can be no emergency meetings of the council.

The council secretary shall be responsible for notifying, in writing, the legal organ for Houston County of any and all meetings of the council at least seven days in advance of the meeting with an attached agenda. It is the responsibility of the council secretary to maintain a written record of compliance with this notification requirement. Additionally, the legal organ for Houston County of any and all meetings of the council secretary shall provide advance notification, in writing, to the school community of teachers and parents of any and all school council meetings. (See Article XII, Officers and Duties)

Article VII 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 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 bylaws or changes thereto requires a two-thirds affirmative vote.

Article VIII Remuneration

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

Article IX 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 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.

The school council shall specify in its bylaws the month in which elections are to be held and shall specify a nomination and election process.

Russell Elementary School Council elections will be held annually in the month of January.

Election method/procedures: Nominations shall be accepted by the principal from members within the electing body prior to the actual voting meeting. Nominations from the floor shall be accepted at the meeting of the electing body, provided that the nominee has given prior consent for his name to be placed in nomination. Teacher and parent election meetings shall use the plurality method of election. 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 open, then subsequent votes are required until one single individual emerges with the highest vote. Teachers/Parents must be present and qualified to vote, proxies are not allowed. A person does not have to be present at the time of the vote to be elected to the school council.

Note A: The law allows all qualified parent/guardians of a student enrolled in the school to vote. May more than one qualified parent/guardian of a child enrolled in the school vote during the election meeting? Yes.

Election Ballots: It shall be the responsibility of the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or designee to provide voting ballots to each school principal to be used in the election of parent and teacher representatives to the school council. All ballots, used and unused, shall be returned by the school principal to the Superintendent of Schools for safekeeping following council elections.

Procedure A: Each Teacher/Parent shall be issued one ballot after they have been identified by the school principal or designee as a member of the electing body.

Article X Local School Council Bylaws

The school council shall adopt the initial bylaws and guidelines included herein and such additional bylaws and guidelines as it deems appropriate to conduct the business of the council. The adoption of bylaws or changes thereto requires a two-thirds affirmative vote. The bylaws adopted by local school councils shall not be inconsistent with the language or intent of the *Handbook for School Councils: Policies and Procedures of the Houston County School District*, adopted May 2001, and thereafter, as revised.

Article XI 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.

Article XII Officers and Duties

The officers of the school council shall be a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary. Officers of the council shall be elected by the council at the first meeting of the council following the election of school council members. The officers of the council shall hold office for the term specified in the council's bylaws.

The School Principal

The 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) Perform all of the duties required by law and the bylaws of the council;

- (3) Communicate all council requests for information and assistance to the local school superintendent and inform the council of responses or actions of the local school superintendent;
- (5) Develop the school improvement plan and school operation plan and submit the plans to the school council for its review, comments, recommendations, and approval; and
- (6) Aid in the development of 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, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the chairperson and shall perform such other duties as shall be required by the council.

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 council and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the council or the chairperson, under whose supervision the secretary shall be. In the absence or unavailability of the secretary, the chairperson may designate a member of the council to temporarily perform the Secretary's duties.

Russell Elementary School Council officers will serve a maximum term of two consecutive years from the date they are elected.

Article XIII Accountability

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

- (1) Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
- (2) Regularly participate in council meetings;
- (3) Participate in information and training programs;
- (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.

Article XIV 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 and a copy of any affidavit executed shall be forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or designee within three working days (Monday-Friday).

All 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.

Article XV Term of Office

Members of the council shall serve for a term of two years or for such other term as may be specified in the council's bylaws, except as provided in the law. Upon the expiration of the terms of the council members in office on July 1, 2004, the subsequent terms of the council members shall be staggered. In order to stagger the terms, the initial terms of one-half of the parent/guardian council members, one-half of the businessperson council members, one-half of the teacher council members, and one-half of the other members specified in Article IV (5) shall have initial terms of one year and the remaining members shall have initial terms of two years.

Council members may serve more than one term.

The term of office of all council members shall begin and end on the dates specified in the council's bylaws.

Russell Elementary School Council terms will begin immediately following elections in January and end on the day new members are elected in January after their second consecutive year served on the council.

Article XVI

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. All Council committee meetings shall be subject to the Georgia Open Meetings Act.

Article XVII

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 budget and expenditure information and site average class sizes by grade, to the council as requested or as required by state law or state board rule. The local board shall also designate an employee of the school system to attend council meetings as requested by a school council for the purpose of responding to

questions the council may have concerning information provided to it by the local board or actions taken by the local board.

The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or designee is appointed by the Houston County Board of Education to attend council meetings as requested, respond to council questions and provide information as requested by said council.

The local board of education shall receive and consider all recommendations of the school council, including the annual report, and shall have the authority to overturn any decision of the school council as follows:

(1) Public notice shall be given to the community of the local board's intent to consider school council reports, recommendations, appointments, or any other decision of a school council;

Procedure A: Council items shall be listed on the board's agenda and such agenda shall be faxed to the Director of School and Community Relations for public notice. Copy of the notice shall be posted for public review at the School Board's Administration Offices.

(2) Written notice shall be given to the members of the school council at least seven working days prior to such local board meeting, along with a notice of intent to consider a council report, recommendation, appointment, or any other decision of the council;

Procedure A: The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources or designee is responsible for notifying at least ten (10) working days (Monday – Friday) in advance, in writing (e-mail acceptable notice), the principal of each school council that has matters pending before the board, that the board of education shall hold a meeting and at such meeting the board intends to consider a council's report, recommendation, appointment, or any decision made by the council. Such notice shall contain the meeting date of the board of education and the matters to be considered and shall be kept on file for reference should a question arise concerning notification. It then becomes the responsibility of the principal to notify, in writing, each member of the council at least seven days prior to the board of education meeting concerning the notice received.

(3) The members of the school council shall be afforded an opportunity to present information in support of the school council's report, recommendation, or action; through the school principal and

Procedure A: The principal shall speak for and represent the council in all school council matters before the board of education. At the Board Chairperson's discretion, other members of the council may be allowed the opportunity to present information.

(4) A majority of the board members present, representing a quorum, vote to overturn the council decision.

The local board of education shall respond to each recommendation of the school council within 60 calendar days after being notified in writing of the recommendation.

Note A: Notification is perfected when the board of education officially received written notification in a meeting (regular, called or work session) of the board of a school council's report, recommendation, appointment, or other decision of a council. After initial receipt of a school council item, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources is responsible for placing school council item(s) on the board agenda within the sixty (60) calendar day requirement.

Article XVIII

Scope of Council Responsibilities

School councils are advisory bodies. The councils shall provide advice and recommendations to the school principal and, where appropriate, the local board of education and local school superintendent on any matter related to student achievement and school improvement, including, but not limited to, the following:

- (1) School board policies;
- (2) School improvement plans;
- (3) Curriculum and assessments;
- (4) Report cards issued or audits of the school conducted by the Office of Student Achievement;
- (5) Development of a school profile which shall contain data as identified by the council to describe the academic performance, 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.

Article XIX
Role of the School Council in the Principal Selection Process

The role of the school council in the principal selection process shall be determined in policy written by the local board of education.

The following guidelines established by the Houston County Board of Education shall be used in selecting new principals effective October, 2004:

There shall be two (2) rounds of interviews.

The Superintendent will seek advice from the School Council concerning the qualities, abilities, and leadership style that meets the needs of the school.

I. Round One

The Executive Director of Elementary or the Executive Director of Secondary Operations shall select a committee consisting of five (5) members:

- a) Executive Director
- b) Two (2) teachers from the campus where the opening exists
- c) One (1) principal on the same level from another campus
- d) One (1) person from the Teaching and Learning Department.

This committee shall interview all applicants and select at most three (3) applicants for the second round of interviews.

II. Round Two

The second round of interviews will be conducted by the Superintendent's

Committee. This committee shall consist of six (6) members.

- a) Superintendent
- b) Assistant Superintendent for Operations
- c) Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
- d) Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Services
- e) Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning
- f) Executive Director

This committee shall interview the top applicants (at most three) and the Superintendent will recommend his selection to the Board of Education for approval.

Article XX Student Information

School councils are not entitled to student information, which is not considered directory information pursuant to FERPA.

Article XXI 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 bylaws.