

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

About the Councils

School Community Councils (SCCs) play a vital role in Hawai'i's education system. They are part of the leadership structure at each school and enable shared-decision making among principals, teachers, school staff, parents, students and community members to improve student achievement.

School Community Councils are:

- A group of people who are elected by their peers to advise the principal on matters that affect student achievement and school improvement. Their primary role is to participate in the process that ensures that the needs of all students are addressed in the school's Academic Plan.

- Forums for open discussion and problem-solving related to student achievement. Research suggests that the collaborative process contributes to improved school culture, classroom practices and student learning, and the development of a strong professional community of educators.

- A means to involve the community in the discussion of educational issues and help schools identify and respond to the educational needs of the community.

Benefits

Benefits to members of a School Community Council include:

- Learning about educational research and factors that impact student achievement;
- Being an important partner in the education system, whose views are valued;
- Contributing to the shared goal of improving student achievement;
- Having a vehicle through which to express opinions and share ideas; and
- Being informed about what is happening at the school.

History

In 2004, the Hawai'i State Legislature took significant steps to ensure that school community members would have greater influence in public education. The "[Reinventing Education Act of 2004](#)" (Act 51 as amended by Act 221, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2004) created Schools Community Councils (SCC) to support school improvement and the academic achievement of students through increased community involvement in the school as outlined in Section 5 of the Act.

Act 51 amended [HRS Section 302A-1124](#) to mandate the Board of Education and Department of Education to establish a school community council system for Hawai'i's schools. The law improves the way the state's single school system is organized, particularly by allowing for more educational decision-making at the school level and thereby increasing the involvement of those directly affected by the decisions.

The Hawai'i State Board of Education adopted the following policies to implement School Community Councils in all Hawai'i public schools (see Section 6 Additional Resources and Tools for these policies and statues):

- [Policy 500.19](#) establishes school community councils in all public schools.

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- [Policy 500.20](#) establishes procedures for schools to request waivers from specific Board policies or rules and/or exceptions to specific provisions of labor agreements.

- Policy 2413, Student Instructional Hours and School Year Requirements Policy and Waiver Process specifies procedures for schools to request waivers from the policy on student instructional hours and school year requirements pursuant to HRS 302A-251.

Purpose

As described in Act 51, School Community Councils were established “to provide a mechanism whereby parents, the community and other key stakeholders can have a substantially increased voice in the affairs of their local schools, with a clear and concrete enunciation of powers and responsibilities, and how these are shared with those of the principal.”

The policies developed by the Hawai`i State Board of Education and Hawai`i State Department of Education to implement School Community Councils are based on three common-sense principles:

- Individuals closest to the students should be more involved in making significant decisions affecting the instructional program of the school.
- A school plan to improve student academic achievement receives more support when people understand and help create that plan.
- When families participate in a variety of ways in their children’s education, including decision-making, their children and the school are more successful.

Roles and Functions

Board of Education Policy 500.19 describes the major functions of School Community Councils:

- Review the school Academic Plan and Financial Plan and either recommend revisions of the plans to the principal, or recommend the plans for approval by the complex areas superintendent.
- Review evidence of school progress on the implementation of the Academic Plan and align the plan with the educational accountability system under HRS [302A-1004](#).
- Participate in the principal selection and evaluation process.
- Provide opportunities for community input and collaboration.
- Recommend to the principal the school’s repair and maintenance needs.
- Provide recommendations for revising or creating new school level policies and procedures.
- Request waivers to state policies, rules, procedures and exceptions to collective bargaining agreements to improve student achievement.
 - Make available notices and agendas of public meetings no less than six calendar days prior on the school’s Community Engagement webpage and in the school’s administrative office for review during regular business hours.
 - Make available minutes from public meetings on a timely basis on the school’s Community Engagement webpage and in the office.
 - Establish policies governing SCC composition, election, staggered terms of office for members, operation, and vacancies; ensure membership includes the principal and at least one parent, teacher, staff, community member, and student and the number of school personnel equals the number of primary stakeholders.
 - SCCs shall elect officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary, others as needed).

The School Community Council:

- Is not a governing board;
- Does not hire and fire the principal;
- Does not control school finances;
- Does not evaluate teachers or other staff;
- Is not a forum for promoting personal agendas; and
- Is not a body whose members “represent” constituencies.