



Tips for Effective Council Operations

Best Practices

- Participate and attend meetings regularly.
- Create a positive and productive agenda.
- Council members should have the opportunity to suggest agenda items at each meeting. The Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) Chair should clarify what is expected of the council for each item on the meeting's agenda.
- Keep detailed minutes of each council meeting and make them available to the public on the school's website.
- Council members need background information concerning laws, policies, and regulations and access to the expertise and experience of central office personnel.
- Council members should recognize their responsibility to propose suggestions for improving the operation of the school.
- Councils should set both long-term and short-term goals, both of which are necessary to bring about substantial school improvement.
- Monitoring progress continuously is necessary for councils to evaluate their efforts and progress toward attainment of goals.

Meeting Participation

- Each council member is responsible for doing his/her part to make meetings productive.
- Between meetings, council members should study the issues and generate practical solutions to problems.
- During meetings, council members should represent their constituents, yet set aside self or constituent-group interests that interfere with council goals.
- Council members need to listen with open minds and make thoughtful, well-informed decisions.
- Attend to others while they are voicing their opinions, sampling interest, or exploring commitments to proposals. Avoid engaging in side conversations, using cell phones, or shuffling papers while someone is speaking. Nonverbal expressions can give away how you really feel about a person or an idea. Encourage other members to participate and seek the viewpoints of others.
- All council members need to stick to the meeting agenda. Members should present their viewpoints briefly and allow the meeting to move from one agenda item to the next. Avoid discussing irrelevant issues. Setting time limits for the discussion of each item may be helpful.

Meeting Plans

- **Agendas** – Most councils make written agendas available to council members and other attendees for each meeting.
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- **Minutes** – Minutes are taken at every meeting to serve as an official record of discussions and decisions. Minutes from previous meetings may be distributed to council members at or before the next meeting. All minutes shall be made available to the public on the school’s website and upon written request made to the school’s principal or council chair.
- **Correspondence/Announcements** – Most councils place correspondence as an agenda item at the beginning of the meeting. Correspondence may include information such as announcements from the central office, reports from foundations, and requests for proposals.
- **Reports** – Reports are a way to present information. A principal’s report offers information about school programs and activities. The LSIC shall ensure that a report of concerns, suggestions, and points raised is produced from the Stakeholder Meeting, made available on the school’s website, and forwarded to both the county board and the Office of Accountability at the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). The county board shall also post the report on its website.
- **Committees** – Committees are a means of getting work done efficiently. Committee members meet outside of regular council meeting times. They investigate issues, read research, compile their findings, and report recommendations at the regular council meeting. Committees may include members who are not on the council.
- **Seating Patterns and Meeting Places** – Generally, council members sit together at tables that permit them to see and hear each other. Many councils arrange their seats so that audience members can see and hear them. The room should be comfortable and accommodate the size of the audience.
- **Public Participation** – Most councils have an official place on the agenda to hear the concerns of the people and may invite presentations from non-members.

Problem-Solving Process

- **Assess Improvement Needs** – This step focuses on gathering data to identify areas in need of improvement.
 - **Establish Priorities** – After needs assessment results have been analyzed and reported, the improvement team should set priorities by ranking needs according to what must be accomplished.
 - **Develop School Improvement Plans** – The team should write an improvement plan for each improvement goal or objective. The plan should specify activities and a timeline to accomplish each objective.
 - **Identify Resources and Support Needs** – To implement the improvement plans, support from within and outside the district may be needed.
 - **Create a Timeline for Improvement Efforts** – Timelines provide targets to achieve. However, realistic schedules must be established to avoid frustration and discouragement.
 - **Implement the Improvement Plan** – Preparing to implement improvement plans involves creating awareness, setting expectations, assigning roles and responsibilities, and making logistical arrangements.
 - **Monitor and Evaluate Progress** – This step determines if the plans implemented attained the improvement objectives. Evaluation requires careful collection of implementation data, clearly defined student outcome measures, and a willingness to impartially assess the success of the improvement plans.
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