

HES School Council FAQ

What is a School Council, and why do we have one at HES?

A school council is a school building-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers, community members and, at the secondary level, students. The state requires that there be a school council at each public school.

How are members selected?

- Parent members are selected by HES parents in PTO run elections
- Teacher members are selected by the teachers in HES
- Community members are recruited by the principal

What are the main areas of responsibility for school councils?

The law outlines four main responsibilities for councils. School councils are to assist principals in:

1. Adopting educational goals for the school that are consistent with local educational policies and statewide student performance standards
2. Identifying the educational needs of students attending the school
3. Reviewing the annual school budget
4. Formulating an annual school improvement plan

What is the council's role in the school budget?

The law specifies that school councils assist in the review of school budgets in order to understand the implications for items in the school improvement plan. In Harvard, the school budget is prepared by the middle of the school year in order to allow for negotiation with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee in the town budget process.

What are the elements of the annual school improvement plan?

The school improvement plan has the following elements:

- An assessment of the impact of class size on student performance, student-to-teacher ratios and ratios of students to other supportive adult resources
- A scheduled plan for reducing class size, if necessary
- Professional development for the school's staff and the allocation of any professional development funds in the school budget
- Enhancement of parental involvement in the life of the school
- School safety and discipline
- Establishment of a school environment of tolerance and respect for all groups
- Extra-curricular activities
- Means for meeting, within the regular education programs at the school, the diverse learning needs of as many children as possible, including children with special needs
- Any further subjects the principal, in consultation with the school council, shall consider appropriate

When is the school improvement plan submitted, and to whom?

Plans are submitted annually to the school committee. The school committee sets the schedule for the submission and review.

What are some areas in which councils cannot be involved?

School councils cannot be involved in labor relations and collective bargaining for public employees, including teacher contracts. Issues such as compensation, workload, conditions of work and worker evaluation procedures are subject to collective bargaining. A council should not become involved as an ombudsman or a grievance committee in individual cases that involve students, parents, teachers and other school staff.

More information on the role of school councils is available on the Department of Education website at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/schoolcouncils/default.html> and the Massachusetts School Council Handbook at <http://teacherweb.com/MA/Runkle/SchoolCouncil/schoolcouncilhandbook.pdf>