

What Makes a Good School Council Policy?

Are your school councils considering revising a school council policy? School council policies are ways to strengthen the school's efforts to improve student achievement, not just requirements to fulfill. Policies need to:

- contribute to raising student performance
- keep the focus on achieving your mission and goals
- achieve the following purposes:
 - support and improve teaching and learning and lead to enhancing student achievement
 - outline a common procedure
 - provide guidelines
 - meet a legal requirement

School councils regularly should review and revise policies. Often policies become outdated; however, always remember that a school council policy is a binding document. If the policy is not up-to-date, misinformation and misdirection can occur. When revising policies, remember to avoid these policy pitfalls:

- focusing on compliance rather than on commitment to improving student achievement
- creating requirements for staff that may not lead to improved student achievement
- writing a policy to address an issue that needs to be dealt with on a more individual basis or is already dealt with in another document
- being reactive instead of proactive to a situation

- including too many monitoring requirements in the policy (as it is important to look at monitoring requirements from all policies and see if there is an overload)
- not clearly representing roles of all stakeholder groups
- running the school on a daily basis

Sound policies contribute to the mission of the school. Help school council members analyze and improve their own policies. Questions to ask when revising a school council policy include:

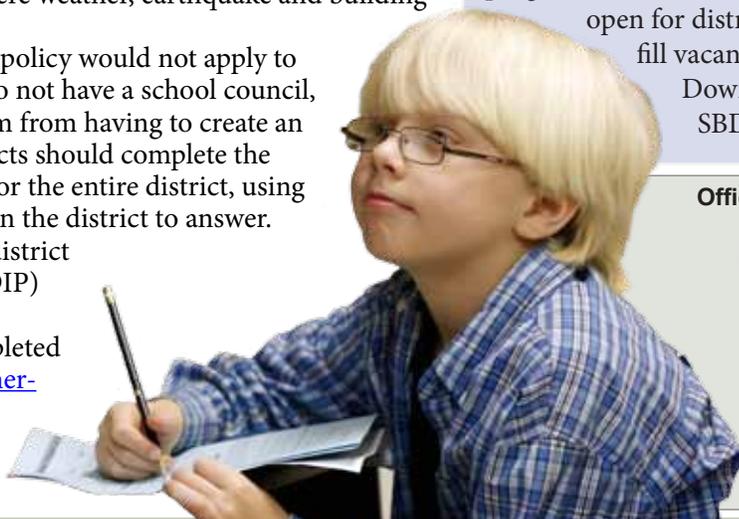
- **Are the school council policies legal?** Policies should be within council responsibilities, not break any legal limits and explain any related legal requirements.
- **Are the school council policies clear?** Policies should use simple wording, spell out who will be responsible for each step and be organized so information is easy to find.
- **Are the school council policies practical?** Policies should give each person manageable responsibilities, have a timetable that can work and have a clear process for following up to be sure the policy is implemented well and produces good results.
- **Are the school council policies focused on improving student achievement?** Policies should set rules that make sense and support student achievement directly or indirectly.
- **Do the school council policies support positive relationships?** Policies should focus on high expectations.

Emergency Plan

Recent amendments made to SB 8 and HB 354 expands Kentucky's current emergency plan law [KRS 158.163] by requiring schools and districts to include community first responders in their emergency plans. The School Safety Act requires every school council to have a "policy" on emergency plans and to adopt an emergency plan to include procedures for fire, severe weather, earthquake and building lockdown.

Although the SBDM policy would not apply to Non-A1 schools that do not have a school council, it does not exempt them from having to create an emergency plan. Districts should complete the assurances in ASSIST for the entire district, using input from all schools in the district to answer.

The comprehensive district improvement plan (CDIP) assurances for districts should have been completed by Nov. 1. A [sample emergency plan](#) is on the KDE SBDM home-page.



SBDM Council Verification

Final call for SBDM council verification data for districts: All school council member verifications should have been entered into the Web application database by Nov. 1. KDE has started downloading reports from the Web application and is verifying districts' submission progress. The [Web-based verification form](#) will remain open for districts to add information as they fill vacancies and minority membership. Download instructions for entering SBDM verification data [here](#).

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SBDM and the Best Practices Website

The mission of KDE's [Best Practices website](#) is to promote practices that motivate, engage and provide measurable results in school district achievement, processes and learning in schools throughout Kentucky. This site will support teachers, administrators, district personnel and any other education advocates, including school council membership, who are seeking strategies that have been proven successful in a variety of settings. The Best Practices website researches, compiles, disseminates and promotes practices for educators with the goal of improving educational opportunity.

The Best Practices website includes all aspects of education that impact student learning both directly and indirectly. This means that these practices go



beyond just compliance. They are categorized by five Advanced Standards: purpose and direction; governance and leadership; teaching and assessing for learning; resources and support systems; and using results for continuous improvement. The Best Practice website spotlights and celebrates schools and districts that embody strategies that result in students' academic improvement.

KDE knows of many success stories around the school council and the goal of improving student achievement. We encourage you to submit successes to the Best Practices website.

This website allows good and successful initiatives to be shared not only statewide, but nationally on the KDE website. The link to the Best Practices website is <http://education.ky.gov/school/bpsust/>.