

## **Lesson 2**

### **LSC Operations**

#### **Lesson 2 Objectives**

- To understand how adult collaboration and trust help students achieve.
- To recognize the important role of LSC members as elected officials.
- To be aware of the key laws and policies that govern LSC operations.
- To learn some elements of an effective meeting.

**Prepared by Parents United for Responsible Education, October 2006.  
Please refer to the Introduction to this Guide for important background information  
on the development of this document.**

# Lesson 2

## LSC Operations

### Table of Contents

#### **Introduction: Why LSCs?**

- 2-1 Adult Collaboration Improves Schools
- 2-2 Common Traits of Collaborative LSC Relationships
- 2-4 You are now an Elected Official!

#### **LSC Meeting Best Practices**

- 2-6 Effective LSC Meetings
- 2-11 How to Make a Motion
- 2-13 How Principals can Support Effective LSCs

#### **LSC Operations: Legal Requirements**

- 2-16 LSC Organizational Meeting
- 2-18 LSC Officers
- 2-23 Setting an Annual Calendar of LSC Meetings
- 2-24 LSC Committees
- 2-26 LSC Bylaws
- 2-27 Rules of Order
- 2-28 LSCs Need Information (*list of key documents*)
- 2-29 LSC Training
- 2-31 The Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act
- 2-32 LSCs and the Open Meetings Act
- 2-34 Advance Notice: Schedules and Agendas
- 2-41 LSCs and the Freedom of Information Act
- 2-42 LSC Quorum and Voting Rules
- 2-44 Charts: Voting Rules for Regular and Special Motions
- 2-47 LSC Eligibility, Removal and Replacement
- 2-51 LSC IDs
- 2-52 LSC Election

#### **Sample Meeting Documents**

- 2-61 Sample Agenda for Regular LSC Meeting
- 2-62 Sample Notice and Agenda for Special LSC Meeting
- 2-63 Sample Notice and Agenda for LSC Organizational Meeting
- 2-64 Sample Agendas Month by Month
- 2-68 Sample Minutes for a Regular Meeting
- 2-72 Sample Minutes for a Special Meeting
- 2-74 Sample Motion Form

# Why LSCs?

## Adult Collaboration Improves Schools

Chicago-based research says that improved student achievement is tied to strong academic expectations for student success combined with trusting relationships in the school community.

### Successful Schools have Common Practices

An October 1997 study by Designs for Change identified schools which had improved the most in reading achievement since 1990, and looked for the common factors in these schools, a “distinctive set of practices” which are correlated with substantial improvements in student achievement. These practices, which are tied to five essential supports for student learning, include:

- Active and effective **Local School Councils**.
- Effective school **principals** who involve others in decision making.
- More **teacher involvement** in decision making.
- More **teacher outreach to parents**.
- Students who feel **safe** in their schools.
- Teacher **collaboration** and information sharing.
- Teachers who **trust** one another.
- Teachers who are encouraged to **innovate**.
- An overriding focus on **improved student achievement**.

## Cooperative Adult Effort Raises Academic Achievement

The Designs for Change study looked at the level of cooperation among adults in schools and determined that “schools that were low-achieving in 1990, but then substantially improved reading achievement, scored significantly higher on ‘Adult Cooperative Effort’ compared with schools that did not improve reading achievement.”\* On the other hand, elementary schools on probation and many low-performing Chicago high schools showed serious deficits in cooperation and collaboration.

## Social Support Motivates Students to Learn

An October 1999 study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research analyzed how successful schools combine high expectations for all students with the support students need for school success. Social support gives students a sense of trust, confidence, and psychological safety. “We found that the amount of social support that students experienced is strongly related to one-year gains in both reading and math achievement. Clearly, students who experience strong support from teachers, parents, peers, and members of their communities also learn more.”\*\*

\*“Chicago Elementary Schools with a Seven-Year Trend of Improved Reading Achievement: What Makes these Schools Stand Out?” (1997) Designs for Change.

\*\*“Improving Chicago’s Schools: Social Support, Academic Press, and Student Achievement: A View from the Middle Grades in Chicago” (1999) Consortium on Chicago School Research, a report of the Chicago Annenberg Research Project.

# Common Traits of Collaborative LSC Relationships

## Shared Knowledge of the Law

- Collaborative LSC relationships begin with a **shared understanding** of the school reform law and other relevant laws and policies. It helps if all LSC members, including the principal, attend the LSC basic training together. That way everyone gets the same information at the same time.
- All LSC members should have a copy of the **key sections of the school reform law** (which you can find in the Resources section of this Guide, p.54) , the **official CPS guidelines** for LSCs (found on the CPS web site, <http://www.cps.k12.il.us/AboutCPS/Departments/OSCR/index.html>) and this Guide as an additional resource.
- When questions about the law, rules, procedures, or central office directives come up, the group has **an agreed-upon way of checking and reporting back**. Time is not wasted arguing about some technicality in the law or a rule that no one is quite sure about. LSC work moves forward.

## Shared Information

- Principals provide timely, adequate information to the entire LSC.
- **At the beginning of the year**, each LSC member receives a set of key school documents such as the school improvement plan, the final budget, the NCLB Parent Compact (if the school receives NCLB funds), school data and reports, LSC by-laws, school staff organizational list, and a list of all LSC members at the school.
- **During the year**, the principal provides monthly reports on internal accounts, budget updates, attendance, discipline, school improvement plan implementation, items related to the principal evaluation criteria, and any other regular reports useful to the LSC.
- **Well in advance of the deadline for submission** of the SIPAAA and budget, the principal provides a draft for LSC and community review.
- LSC members **bring concerns to the principal as they arise** rather than waiting for an LSC meeting. This way the principal is not taken by surprise. He or she is given the opportunity to look into a situation before it comes up in a meeting.

## Multiple Opportunities for Collaboration

- The LSC has several **active committees** including a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) parent advisory committees and bilingual advisory committees in schools with those programs which study, review, and evaluate proposals and programs and bring recommendations to the LSC.
- There is **an active teacher Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC)**.
- These committees **involve non-LSC members** in LSC work such as principal evaluation and selection.
- The principal **includes other LSC members** in staff development sessions and when candidates for staff positions are interviewed.

## Welcome Extended to All

- The LSC treats everyone **fairly, equally, and patiently**. Every LSC member and all parents, staff, students, and community members are accepted and valued.
- The LSC generally responds to both support and opposition by inviting **greater involvement** and directing energy into productive work for the school and the children.

## Two-way Trust

- Collaborative LSC relationships are based on **two-way trust**. Trust must be formed between the principal and the other LSC members, and between the LSC and the staff, the students, the parents, and the school community.
- Trust is built when people speak the truth, deal with each other honestly, fairly and calmly, and welcome and respond to any and all questions to the best of their abilities.

Trust happens in a school where the characteristics listed above are practiced and become “**the way we do things here.**”

# You are now an Elected Official!

How are you different once you become an LSC member? You're still a parent, a neighbor, a teacher with your own insights and experiences. But you are also:

## ...An elected official

- LSCs are not advisory bodies! You have joined the ranks of aldermen, state representatives, and others as elected officials who have **critical responsibilities** and **decision making authority** under the law.
- In order to function as an effective representative, you must **learn as much as you can** about your role and what is required.
- You need to **respect and follow the law** and all other rules and policies that govern LSC operations. LSCs have been a model for other governing bodies- it's everyone's responsibility to maintain the good track record LSCs have established.
- You need to learn about the **Illinois school reform law**. It's not rocket science- you can go to a workshop or other training and you can read the law yourself. Key sections of the law are included in the Resources section of this Guide beginning on p.54.
- You will be given a lot of **information** about your school and how it runs.
- You will make **decisions** to improve your school.

## ...A member of an elected decision making body

- Like most elected officials, LSC members sometimes disagree, in public!
- This is called **debate**, and it is okay as long as you stick to the issues and ground rules.
- You will **share ideas** so that you can come up with the best decisions for your school.
- After you have talked and debated, you will **take action** to make your school better.

## How you can be an effective LSC member

- **Participate in the LSC training.**
- **Seek additional assistance and training** at the time that your LSC carries out specific key duties such as principal selection.
- **Attend every LSC meeting.** You can't make good decisions if you don't know what's going on.
- **Ask questions.** Don't be embarrassed if you don't understand something. The more you know and understand, the more effective you will be.
- **Listen** to the parents, teachers, and neighbors of your school. Like you, they have important insights and ideas.
- **Work on committees.** Committee work will help you make better decisions. In committee, you can take the time to talk about issues and come up with sound, thoughtful, useful recommendations for the LSC.
- **Analyze data** about your school to learn what your school's needs are (training is available from CPS and many of the organizations listed in the Resources section beginning on p.43).
- **Connect your school** with resources to meet school needs.
- **MOST IMPORTANT!** Always ask yourself, "**Is this decision going to help our children learn and our school improve?**"

# **LSC Meeting Best Practices**

# Effective LSC Meetings

## Making your LSC Meetings a Democratic Model for your School

Decision making in the schools has moved from bureaucracy to **democracy**. A democratically-run LSC will capture the energy and strength that comes from shared decision making. It will provide the children in your school with a good model of democracy, citizen involvement, and volunteerism. It will demonstrate to them that the adults in the school care very much about their education. **This is an important contributing factor to improved student achievement.**

Most of us have a lot to learn about working in a democratic group. Exchanging ideas in public can be awkward, and we often feel uncomfortable with disagreement. Issues that concern our children and their education can be very **emotional**. To complicate things, many people are not clear about the rights and responsibilities of the LSCs. They may feel threatened or uncomfortable with the LSC's role. Meetings may not run smoothly, especially at first. Your LSC will learn and grow as you work together. **Fortunately, you can prepare for a good start!**

## Training

- Begin with a **shared understanding** of LSC rights and responsibilities and the roles of the principal, the Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC), the NCLB Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), and the Bilingual Council (BAC), if you have one.
- A basic understanding of **parliamentary procedure** will help; you can use the Model Rules of Procedure (see more on p.2-27 and in the Resources section, p.4).
- You might consider **reading parts of the reform law together**. Key sections of the law are included in the Resources section of this Guide starting on p.54.
- You may want to arrange for **special training** in these areas.
- Consider **inviting other interested persons** to attend your meetings and join committees. The more your community knows about the LSC's role, the more they will be able to help.

## Establishing Ground Rules

You have to work together in order to accomplish anything, but that is not always easy. Establish some rules of etiquette or decorum in meetings **before** you have problems. Here are some examples:

- No one questions or criticizes another member's motives. Assume that everyone has the improvement of the school in mind.
- No personal comments.
- Keep to the issue (motion) under consideration.
- Limit speeches to three minutes unless the council agrees to allow additional time.
- Members speak no more than twice on each issue.
- Alternate speakers for and against the issue.
- Members should listen with respect to others.

Your rules of decorum can be changed or added to at any time. Don't be afraid to ask the chair to remind members of your ground rules, or to read them before each meeting.



## More Tips for a Good Meeting

When members are unprepared, meetings become long, ineffective, or both! LSC business meetings are not the place to read minutes or reports or debate every issue. Effective LSC meetings consist mainly of **approving minutes**, hearing brief **reports**, and **taking action** (making and voting on motions).

### Prepare the meeting

- To the extent possible, LSC members should have all information necessary to decision making early enough to **read in advance**. Examples: the agenda, the minutes, and any reports.
- Members, **read your reports and minutes** before the meeting!
- Establish your **committees**. Ask them to research and review the issues in their areas of responsibility. This involves more people and allows time for important decisions to be considered in depth. See p.2-24 for more on LSC committees.
- Carefully **prepare the agenda**. This can be done by the chair or an agenda committee such as the LSC chair, secretary, PPLC chair, and principal. More about agendas on p.2-34 and 2-61 - 64.
- Include on the agenda all **unfinished issues and activities** from the last meeting.
- Be sure to **specify any items that will be voted on**.
- Have (and publicize) a way for **other people** to place items on the agenda.

### At the meeting

- **Avoid reading minutes and lengthy reports** at the meeting.
- Changes or corrections to the minutes **should not be debated endlessly**. Any necessary corrections to the minutes should be made in the form of a motion.
- Where possible, committees should submit **written reports**. Remember that committee recommendations are advisory- you have the right to ask for further information and the responsibility to make up your own mind.
- If a committee is bringing a proposal for the LSC to vote on, **the proposal should be listed on the agenda**. Some LSCs consider committee proposals during or just after a committee report; others add the proposed action to New Business or Old Business on the agenda.

### The action part of the agenda should consist of

- Motions made (what you plan to do).
- Motions seconded (more than one person supports motion).
- Debate on the motion (all sides of an issue are heard).
- Calling the question (close out the debate).
- Taking the vote (don't forget to vote!!); check the charts on p.2-44 - make sure you have enough votes. Also, see p.2-11, "How to Make a Motion."

### Avoid unfocused discussions

LSC can get caught up in long discussions that go nowhere if there is no motion on the floor. While some flexibility is desirable to allow people to discuss important issues, it is almost always more effective and productive to **focus the discussion on a specific motion**. Issues that cannot be captured in the language of a motion should probably be discussed outside of the LSC business meeting.

## Record all votes

Make sure all votes are properly recorded in the minutes (votes for, against, and abstentions). The total should add up to the number of LSC members who were actually at the meeting, minus the principal for any votes that concern the principal's contract and the student for votes on any personnel issue (if present, the principal and student should be listed as abstaining on such motions).

## Learn how to debate and disagree

Some people are afraid of conflict. They worry the school will suffer if the LSC members are not "united". Don't be pressured by calls for "unity" before you have had a chance to debate the issues. In a democracy, we do not expect that some or even most problems will be solved by consensus. In fact, **an interplay of different ideas and opinions is healthy and often crucial to the development of creative solutions to the serious issues faced by our schools.** Unity comes when the LSC reaches a decision and the school community follows up with action.

However, conflict would turn to outright fighting if we didn't have some rules. Many people do not realize that Robert's Rules of Order (parliamentary procedure) is the original model for conflict resolution. Rules of order:

- Give all persons **equal rights**.
- Provide that **the will of majority** will be carried out, but only **after the minority has had a fair chance to have its say**.
- Organize the discussions so that only **one item of business is considered at a time**.

## Use rules of order

Your LSC may ask a trusted person to act as your parliamentarian (the person who tells you what the rules say any time you have a question), or you may elect someone to serve in that role. See more about Rules of Order beginning on p.2-27.

## How to include your fellow teachers, parents, and community residents

Some things to do right away:

- **Publicize your meetings** and other activities in a way that is as accessible as possible to everyone who wants to know.
- Be organized enough so that **agendas are available to everyone ahead of the meeting day**.
- Be **clear** on your agenda about what business you will be discussing.
- Set a policy for community involvement in your meetings. Have a time of "open forum" or "public comment" at each meeting. Should it come at the beginning, middle, or end of your meeting? There are advantages and disadvantages to each. **Be consistent** and be sure that the agenda clearly shows the time for public comment. A sample policy is on the following page.
- Establish a procedure for **following up on community concerns**. Someone should take direct responsibility for getting back to the person with an answer as soon as possible. This should be reported to the LSC and the public at the next meeting.
- Record the comments, concerns, etc. of the public in your minutes in summary form.

## Public Participation

LSCs are required by law to make time for public participation during their meetings at least twice a year. Most LSCs include public participation on every agenda. Some even allow members of the public to comment on each motion prior to a vote.

LSCs need to hear from the public and can learn a lot from their concerns and ideas. However, some LSCs find it challenging to manage public testimony, especially if there is disagreement. Often problems arise because the public is not clear about what the LSC's role is, or under what rules the LSC operates.

## How to prepare for conflict with your fellow teachers, parents, and community members

It will happen, at some point! Some suggestions:

- **Don't lose your cool.** You are an elected official and part of your job is to put up with angry people! Try listening hard to angry members of the public. Focus in on what they are saying rather than how they are saying it.
- Ask members of the public to put their concerns or charges **in writing**.
- If a large group comes to speak about the same issue, in the interests of saving time you may ask them to appoint **one or two spokespersons** to explain the group's concerns.
- It is not appropriate for LSC members to respond to members of the public in a **defensive or argumentative** way. Debate belongs in the regular portion of the meeting as motions are being considered by the LSC, and not during open forum.
- When people complain, **give them a job to do!** Help them to become part of the solution.
- **LSC members should not be threatened or intimidated.** Do not be afraid to speak up and get help if you feel that you or your children are being threatened. There are civil rights laws and whistleblower protections (see Lesson 1 p.1-48) which protect you as you go about your LSC business.

## Sample public participation policy

It may be useful to adopt a policy such as the one below and include it with every meeting agenda to provide a common understanding of the ground rules for the meeting. This statement could have an asterisk referring back to the public comment agenda item/s.

“Welcome to the Garden School Local School Council (LSC) regular monthly business meeting. The members of the Garden LSC are the elected representatives of our school. The LSC is responsible for setting the school's direction and policies and for monitoring its financial and educational programs. Like all public bodies in Illinois, our meetings are open to the public except when we need to discuss confidential matters.

“If you have a concern, we urge you to bring it first to the teacher or school principal prior to raising it at an LSC meeting, unless you feel that it is an emergency. Please don't refer to individuals by name. If the LSC decides that it is appropriate to hear concerns about specific individuals, we may decide to go into closed session and invite you to share the details with us there.

“The public participation policy of the Garden LSC is to provide two opportunities during each regular business meeting for public comment. Speakers will have two minutes each. Comments may also be submitted in writing to the chair.

“This policy does not prohibit the Garden LSC from deciding to hear additional public comments when the LSC decides such participation is necessary to its operations. For the LSC to expedite business, it is important for the public to respect this policy. The LSC also encourages non-LSC members to join LSC committees. Thank you for your interest!”

### **LSC Advice and Support: A Cooperative Effort**

The intent of the school reform law is that LSC training and support should be provided by a variety of groups and individuals together with CPS, not CPS only. While training is provided “at the direction of the Board” under the law, it’s also stated that the Board “shall collaborate with universities and other interested entities and individuals to offer training to local school council members...The Board is authorized to collaborate with universities, non-profits, and other interested organizations and individuals to offer additional training to local school council members on a regular basis during their term of office.” **LSCs need to become smart consumers of support services, whether from CPS or from outside entities.** Some groups listed in the Resources section beginning on p.43 provide training.

### **Don’t be confused**

Confusion can arise when LSCs get different stories from CPS and from others about the law and other LSC issues. Questions sometimes arise at LSC meetings and LSC members feel pressured into doing or not doing something without feeling confident that they know what’s right. **No one knows every detail of the school reform law so well that they always know the right answer.** As you can see from the thickness of this Guide, there is a lot to know, and laws and policies change all the time.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- **Your LSC chair (and your LSC) is in charge of your meeting.** You should encourage public participation, but you decide when people speak, whose advice or information is asked for, and how that advice or information is used.
- You have a right to get any policy or rule **in writing**, especially one that is being used to direct or influence LSC actions. You have a right to get a second and even a third opinion as well.
- You do not have to invite anyone to participate in your meetings – closed or otherwise – if they are not being helpful. CPS staffers, community groups, and other non-LSC members have no more right than any other member of the public to be present or speak at your meeting. They may participate **only** at the invitation of the LSC.
- Outside of specific, limited powers given to CPS under the law, **CPS is not an enforcement agency** for the school reform law, the Open Meetings Act, etc.
- While CPS can remove LSCs members and dissolve an LSC in specific circumstances (see pp.2-47- 50), there are **due process requirements** that must happen first.
- LSCs have the **right to associate** with and receive assistance from any individual or group you choose. Anyone working for CPS who suggests otherwise should be reported.
- Continue to call on CPS staffers, school reform group representatives, community group people, etc., for assistance **only when you feel that their actions are helpful** to your LSC and your school.

# How to Make a Motion

## What is a motion?

A **motion** is a clear, concise statement by a voting member of a specific action that the group should take.

- **Making a motion:** A motion starts out with “I make a motion that...” or “I move that...” followed by a suggested action. In general, the motion should be related to a specific agenda item and be made during the time that item comes up on the agenda.
- **Seconding the motion** is an indication that at least one other LSC member wishes to discuss the motion. Without a second, the motion “dies” because no one else wants to discuss it.
- Making an **amendment** is suggesting a change to some part of the motion by a member other than the one who made the motion.

## Making a motion

- You ask to be recognized: "Madam Chair?" The chair recognizes you.
- You state your **motion**: "We have \$5,000 in SGSA rollover funds from last year. **I move that we use \$500 in SGSA rollover funds to purchase Great Books material for grades 1 to 3.**"

## Seconding the motion

- The chair asks if there is a **second** to your motion from another member. (A motion "dies" if it is not seconded.). **“Is there a second to the motion?”**
- Another LSC member says, **“I second the motion.”**
- Since your motion is seconded, the chair repeats your motion: “It has been moved and seconded that we use \$500 in SGSA rollover funds to purchase Great Books materials for grades 1 to 3.” The chair may also simply say, **“The motion has been made and seconded.”**

## Debating the motion

- The chair then opens the **discussion (or debate) on the motion**, giving you the first chance to speak.
- You say, "I think that our children need to be exposed to great literature at an earlier age. Right now our Great Books program only serves grades 4 to 8."
- After being recognized or called on by the chair, a teacher member may say, “I think \$500 is too much. I have worked in the Great Books program for several years and I believe that we can purchase enough books for the primary level for a year for \$300.”

## Amending the motion

- The teacher or another member may then make an amendment: "I wish to amend the motion to make the amount \$300."
- You may agree with the motion and say, “I accept that as a ‘friendly’ amendment.” In that case, the dollar amount in your original motion is automatically changed to \$300. There can be further discussion on your amended motion and then the vote.

**Voting on the amendment and/or the motion**

- If you disagree with the amendment, and after any further discussion, a vote is taken, first, on the amendment, and second, on your original motion.
- The chair says, “All those in favor of the amendment to change the amount to \$300, please raise your hand. Any opposed? Any abstentions?”
- If the amendment passes, the chair will say, “The motion on the floor is to use \$300 in SGSA rollover funds for Great Books for grades 1 - 3.” A vote is taken on that motion.
- If the amendment fails, the chair restates your original motion: “The amendment failed; the motion now on the floor is to use \$500 in SGSA rollover funds for Great Books for grades 1 - 3.”
- The chair asks “All in favor? Opposed? Any abstentions? The vote is 8-3 in favor; the motion passes.”

**Voting may be done by a show of hands, voice vote, or roll call.**

*See Sample Motion Form on p.2-74*

# How Principals can Support Effective LSCs

The principal is a critical member of the LSC. Under your principal's contract, he or she has agreed to "faithfully perform his or her obligations as a member of the Local School Council." Research shows that principal support for the LSC is one of the most critical factors in how well the LSC functions.

## **Seek LSC advice and input**

- Include and involve the LSC in all stages of development of the school improvement plan and the total school expenditure plan (budget).
- Involve the LSC in review of textbook and curriculum selections.
- Seek advice of the LSC concerning appointments to fill vacant, additional, or newly-created educational staff positions
- Seek advice of the LSC concerning attendance and discipline policies.

## **Provide timely SIPAAA & budget proposals for LSC review and approval**

- Provide the LSC with a draft school improvement plan proposal and draft budget proposal several weeks prior to the deadline for submission, for LSC review, comment, and revision.
- At least three working days prior to LSC meetings, submit to the LSC all proposals for any amendments to the state, federal, bilingual, and other discretionary funding plans, for LSC approval, or submit the same to the LSC budget committee for review prior to the LSC meeting.
- Submit for LSC approval all requests for receipts and expenditures from the internal accounts.

## **Provide all necessary information in a clear and timely manner**

- Provide copies of the final school improvement plan to all LSC members.
- Provide copies of the final school budget to all LSC members.
- Provide LSC members with all regular budget reports including the tentative budget, the final budget, and monthly budget updates.
- Provide internal accounts reports monthly.
- Report regularly to the LSC on the progress of all SIPAA programs and initiatives.
- Report regularly on school attendance and discipline.
- Report to the LSC on the allocation of certified and uncertified staff.
- As required by law, provide all audits and reviews of school programs or operations.

## **Facilitate effective advisory groups**

- If the school has bilingual programs, assure that a properly constituted Bilingual Advisory Committee is established and that its recommendations on bilingual programs and fund expenditures are brought before the LSC.
- If the school receives Federal Title I (NCLB) funds, assure that a properly constituted Parent Advisory Committee is established and that its recommendations on NCLB programs and fund expenditures are brought before the LSC.
- Facilitate the establishment of a working Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC) which actively assists you and the rest of the LSC in school improvement planning.

**Treat all LSC members in a respectful and professional manner**

- Provide space for official LSC records and notices.
- Assure that the LSC has the resources it needs to carry out its duties including access to a copier, paper, and other materials and supplies.
- Send to the LSC in a timely manner all information needed for LSC decision-making.
- Cooperate fully in the LSC annual principal evaluation.



# **LSC Operations: Legal Requirements**

# LSC Organizational Meeting

Newly-elected members become the official LSC on July 1 after an LSC election.

By law, the LSC organizational meeting must take place every year between July 1 and 14<sup>th</sup>.

At the organizational meeting, LSCs must elect officers and set their annual schedule of regular LSC meetings.

## Who Calls the Organizational Meeting?

- The **previous LSC, or the LSC chair**, who hold office until June 30, can set a date for the first organizational meeting after an election.
- Sometimes due to difficulties communicating with new LSC members during the summer, the **school principal** may need to call the new members, find a suitable meeting date, and notify all LSC members.
- The organizational meeting can also be called by **four or more newly elected LSC members**, who have the right to reschedule an organizational meeting which the previous LSC or principal set up.
- The organizational meeting after an election is considered a **special meeting**. The date of the second year's organizational meeting will be a regular meeting if its date is included in the schedule of regular meetings set at the first year's organizational meeting.
- All LSC members must be **notified in writing** of the date of the first organizational meeting, and of the date of the second year's organizational meeting if it is not added to the LSC's regular meeting schedule.
- The organizational meeting is **open to the public**; notice and a meeting agenda must be posted at least 48 hours before the meeting takes place.

## Purpose

The purpose of the organizational meeting is to

- Set the time and place for any regular LSC meetings for the year (**annual calendar**).
- Select a parent member as **chairperson** for a one-year term.
- Select a **secretary** for a one-year term.

## Quorum Needed

- A quorum of **6 members for an elementary school LSC and 7 members for a high school LSC** must be present to conduct business.
- If less than the minimum number of persons eligible, but at least a quorum, are elected, the LSC shall **appoint eligible persons** to fill vacancies in parent, community or student positions.
- Teacher vacancies must be filled through a **teacher non-binding poll and Board appointment**; teachers selected for these positions may not vote at LSC meetings until the Board has acted on their appointment.
- Student vacancies must be filled through a **student non-binding poll and Board appointment**;

- students selected for these positions may not vote at LSC meetings until the Board acts.
- It is very important to **fill vacancies on a timely basis** to maintain a full membership on the LSC. If the membership falls below a quorum, the LSC loses its ability to act and its powers are taken over by the Central Office (see Board Rule 6-31 in the Resources section of this Guide, p.26).
  - If less than the number required for a quorum is elected, call the Office of School and Community Relations (773-553-1400) for assistance.

### **Optional Recommended Items for the Organizational Meeting**

- Select additional officers such as a vice-chair and corresponding secretary.
- Review bylaws or set up a bylaws committee.
- Arrange for first committee meetings (Budget, SIPAAA, Personnel, etc.).
- Public comment.
- Distribute basic materials to the LSC such as
  - Official CPS manual for LSCs.
  - LSC bylaws.
  - Copy of current principal’s contract.
  - School organizational chart with names and duties of staff.
  - Most recent state school report card; other school data.
  - Contact information for LSC members.
  - Current School Improvement Plan (SIPAAA).
  - Current budget for the school (called “Final Budget”).
  - List of key budget codes.
  - School calendar.
  - Minutes for previous LSC meeting.

You can find a sample notice and agenda for the annual organizational meeting on p. 2-63.

# LSC Officers

## The LSC Chair

- The LSC chair must be a **parent member**.
- The chair is elected by the LSC **each year** at the organizational meeting.
- Research shows that a critical characteristic of an effective LSC is an effective chair.
- The LSC chair prepares and run LSC meetings and carries out any other duties assigned by the LSC.
- If eligible, the same person can be **re-elected** as chair after one year.
- If there is a vacancy in the position, a new chairperson, who must be a parent, is elected by the LSC to serve for the remainder of the one-year term.

### The LSC chair's responsibilities are to:

- Prepare each meeting
- Run the meeting
- Carry out other duties as assigned by the LSC

## Prepare each LSC Meeting

**Make sure that an agenda is prepared.** (A sample agenda for a regular LSC meeting and a special LSC meeting are on pp. 2-61 and 2-62.)

- The LSC decides how the agenda is to be prepared.
- There should be input from the principal and other LSC members, and the LSC may also take agenda item suggestions from the public.
- Include time for public comment and for reports; try to set time limits.

### Make sure that the LSC meeting notice and agenda are posted.

- This must be done at least **48 hours** before the meeting takes place.
- To be fully accountable to the public, the LSC should state on the agenda **all items** of business that will be conducted at a regular meeting. Items not specifically stated on a regular meeting agenda **may still be discussed and considered, but not voted on.** (*\*Note:* This is a change from the information in previous CPS LSC manuals, which suggested that items not listed on the agenda could still be voted on at a regular meeting, but not at a special meeting. The change is related to a recent court ruling. Read more about this on p.2-33, third section.)

### Call special or emergency meetings when necessary.

- Written notice of special meetings must be given to **all LSC members** prior to the meeting.
- A public notice and agenda (including **all** items to be considered) must be posted at least **48 hours** in advance.
- Special meetings may also be called by **four LSC members**.
- Items not listed on the posted agenda of a **special** meeting **may not be considered or voted on**, although the LSC may discuss any issue.

**Arrange for public notice of any change in the regular schedule of LSC meetings.**

- Give at least **ten (10) days notice** of the change by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the school community that the LSC serves. Notice of such change must be posted at the school. This is not necessary if you are only changing the date of **one** meeting.

**Make sure that every LSC member has the material and information he/she needs for the meeting.**

- This includes the written agenda, the minutes from the last meeting, and any information relating to action items/motions they will be asked to consider at the meeting (for example, a proposal for budget transfers).

**Arrange for translation (including sign language) if needed by parents or neighbors.**

**Run the Meeting**

**Make sure that a quorum exists before any business is done.**

- An elementary school LSC must always have **six (6)** members present in order to do business, no matter how many vacancies there are.
- A high school LSC must always have **seven (7)** members present in order to do business, no matter how many vacancies there are.

**Start on time, end on time, and stick to reasonable time limits.**

- Starting your meeting promptly shows respect for everyone's time and good leadership.
- People will start to show up late if they expect that the meeting will start late; don't get into bad habits!
- LSC meetings should take as long as needed to do your business in a responsible manner, but regularly meeting past two or 2 ½ hours can be another sign of poor leadership and lack of organization.
- You may wish to assign an LSC member or a reliable member of the public as timekeeper to help keep business on track and discussions focused on positive action.

**Encourage every LSC member to speak, not just the principal or the most vocal members.**

**Help members focus on issues, not personalities.** Ask people to

- Make motions.
- Keep their comments centered on the motion.
- Come to a decision after a reasonable period of time.

**Help the LSC respond thoughtfully to concerns raised by the public.**

**Maintain control of the meeting.**

- Limit speaking time during debate.
- Control interruptions such as disruptive members of the public, unwanted interference, etc.
- If need be, call on school security or police to remove anyone who continues to disrupt.

**Assign people to follow up on actions approved by the LSC and on questions and concerns raised at the meeting.** You may need to take your own brief notes to remember who is supposed to do what, because it is your job to see that they follow through!

## **Carry out other Duties as Assigned by the LSC**

For example, the LSC may also ask the Chair to:

- Arrange for LSC training.
- Assign an acting secretary to take minutes in the absence of the secretary.
- Explain to the public the LSC policy on videotaping meetings or on public participation.
- Arrange proper notice of and equipment for an LSC member to participate in the meeting by speaker phone (this provision must be in your by-laws and the possibility of speaker phone use must be stated on your agenda in order for an LSC member to participate by speaker phone legally. See details in the Open Meetings Act section beginning on p.2-31).
- Represent the LSC on the probation team of a school on probation.
- Represent the LSC in public, in accordance with the LSC media policy. However, each LSC member has a right to speak publicly as an individual LSC member.
- Assure that the LSC has complete and accurate information about the school reform law, CPS policies and procedures, LSC authority, and other relevant local, state, and federal rules and laws.

**An important DON'T for LSC chairs...**

**DON'T sign documents that were not approved at an LSC meeting!**

## **The LSC Secretary**

- The LSC secretary can be **any member** of the LSC.
- The secretary is elected for a **one-year term** at the LSC's annual organizational meeting
- The LSC Secretary maintains all LSC records, prepares communications, and carries out other duties assigned by the LSC.
- If eligible, the same person can be **re-elected** as secretary after one year.
- If there is a vacancy in the position, a new secretary is selected by the LSC from among its members to serve for the remainder of the one-year term.

## **Maintain all LSC Records**

**Take minutes at all LSC meetings.** Sample minutes are at the end of this lesson, p.2-68 - 73.

Minutes should include

- The time, date and place of each meeting (open or closed).
- The names of all LSC members recorded as present or absent.
- A record of all motions and votes taken.
- A brief record of issues discussed, reports given, presentations, matters raised by the public, and announcements.

**Arrange for audio tape recording of LSC meetings** (required by the Open Meetings Act for all closed session meetings).

- As with all materials, equipment, and resources required for the proper conduct of LSC business, audio tape recording equipment and tapes are to be **provided by the school**.

**Prepare each month's minutes** in a timely manner so that copies can be distributed to LSC members at least three days before each LSC meeting.

- LSC policy may allow for handwritten minutes taken by the secretary to be typed by school staff.
- Allow adequate time for translation of the minutes to be prepared before each LSC meeting in schools where bilingual programs exist, so that LSC members and the public whose English is limited may review the minutes in their native language.
- Assure that there are extra copies of the minutes for members of the public.

**Keep up-to-date minutes on file** for the public in the school office.

- Send a copy of all approved minutes to the Area Office.

**Keep a separate record book** to pass on to the next secretary including letters, memos, reports, minutes, and other documents pertaining to LSC business.

## **Prepare LSC Communications**

**Prepare official LSC correspondence.**

The LSC may elect a corresponding secretary to handle LSC correspondence.

**Issue written notices of regular and special meetings.**

- The School Code requires that **written notice of meetings** be given to the LSC members before any **special or rescheduled regular meeting**.
- The LSC may **set a policy** on how LSC members are to be notified in the event of a **cancellation** or a **change** in a meeting time, place, or location. LSCs may agree to a policy directing notice to be
  - Placed in LSC members' mailboxes.
  - Mailed to members' homes.
  - Sent home with students.
  - Sent by e-mail.
  - Made by telephone to members preferring such notice who have signed a waiver of written notice.
  - Other.

## **Perform other Duties as Assigned by the LSC**

**Should the LSC secretary preside at LSC meetings in the absence of the Chair?** It's not recommended. There is no legal reason for the secretary to preside and, in fact, it is very difficult to take minutes and run a meeting at the same time.

## The LSC Vice-Chair and Other Officers

Some LSCs choose to select a vice-chair.

- The LSC **may but does not have to have** a vice-chair.
- The vice-chair **does not have to be a parent**.
- The vice-chair's job is simple – he or she **runs the LSC meeting** if the LSC chair is unable to attend.
- During a meeting when the chair is present, the chair may ask the vice-chair to moderate debate on a motion in which the chair wishes to take a strong position.
- The vice-chair may also **assist the chair** by collecting committee reports, following up on issues presented to the LSC, etc.
- The vice-chair **may not sign documents** in place of the chair.
- The duties of the vice-chair should be added to the **by-laws**.

### Other Officers

The LSC may elect such other officers as it determines are necessary for the proper operation of the LSC.

- If the LSC does elect other officers, their terms expire at the same time that the terms of the chairperson and the secretary expire (*one-year terms*).
- The LSC's bylaws should include a description of any other officers the LSC chooses to have.

### Other officers may include a

- **Treasurer:** In general, LSCs don't handle money, so you may not need a treasurer unless the LSC decides to fundraise. An internet link to CPS's LSC fundraising policy is on p.2 of the Resources section of this Guide.
- **Sargent-at-arms:** The sargent-at-arms can be responsible for keeping order at a meeting, timekeeping, interpreting LSC guidelines, rules and laws, etc.
- **Parliamentarian:** The parliamentarian assists the Chair in interpreting rules of order at the meeting to help the meeting run smoothly.
- **Corresponding secretary:** As mentioned above, the LSC may wish to elect a member to write letters (signed by the LSC chair) and keep track of correspondence for the LSC.



# Setting an Annual Calendar of LSC Meetings

At your annual LSC organizational meeting, you must set a regular schedule of meetings for the coming year.

**The entire schedule of regular meeting dates and times must be posted in the school all year.**

**LSCs must meet in a location that is open and accessible to the public.**

**Changing this schedule requires a vote of the LSC.**

- You must give the public at least ten (10) days notice of a change in the LSC's regular meeting schedule. This can be done by, for example, sending an announcement to your local newspaper, sending a notice home to parents, and using your school sign.
- This requirement does *not* include changing *just one meeting date* in your annual meeting schedule.

## What do most LSCs do?

### When?

- Most LSCs have **monthly** meetings.
- Some set the same day and time each month (for example, every third Wednesday of the month at 7 pm).
- Other LSCs **alternate** between morning or afternoon and evening meetings.
- Some LSCs meet on Saturdays.
- Some LSCs even meet regularly more than once a month.
- In any case, it's a good idea to **get out a school calendar** as you make this decision so that you can make sure your meeting dates don't conflict with holidays, etc.
- A regular LSC meeting may be scheduled for a legal holiday, but a special meeting cannot.

### Where?

- Most LSCs meet in their school building, but you may also meet in a park house, a religious facility, or even a restaurant, **if the space is open to the public.**
- If meetings are not held at the school, notice of the meeting must be posted both at the school and at the place where the meetings take place.

## Watch the Door!

Most school buildings are locked during the meeting time. LSCs should make sure that someone watches the door to let LSC members and members of the public come in during the meeting, and that signs are up to indicate which door to use.

# LSC Committees

## Your LSC's working groups

- Effective LSCs have committees which work in between LSC meetings to research program and budget proposals, prepare principal evaluation or school progress surveys, or develop recommendations in such areas as student discipline, school uniforms, parent involvement, etc.
- You may not know at the beginning of the year what committees you need; you can create committees any time during the year.
- **Standing committees** should be listed in your by-laws.
- **Special, temporary, or ad hoc committees or task forces** can be created from time to time without amending the by-laws.
- Committee members **do not need to be LSC members**; in fact, committees are a great way to involve other members of the school community in LSC work and to prepare future LSC members.
- However, LSC committees **must follow the Open Meetings Act**; that is,
  - Committee meeting agendas must be posted at least 48 hours prior to a committee meeting.
  - Minutes of committee meetings must be recorded and made available to the public.

## Required Committees

- All schools must have a **Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC)** to advise the LSC and principal on educational issues. Details about the PPLC can be found in Lesson 1, beginning on p.1-27.
- LSCs in schools with bilingual programs must have a **Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC)** as a standing committee of the LSC. The BAC advises the LSC, principal and staff on issues related to the bilingual program. Details about the BAC can be found in Lesson 1, p.1-39.
- All schools receiving No Child Left Behind (NCLB) funds must have a **Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)** which provides input on parent involvement and school improvement. You can read more about the PAC starting on p.1-31 in Lesson 1.

## Other Committees and Groups

### Optional but useful LSC committees include:

- **Budget:** reviews budget proposals, monitors budget reports including internal accounts reports, brings recommendations to LSC.
- **School Improvement Plan (SIPAAA):** prepares and reviews program proposals, monitors progress, makes reports and recommendations to the LSC.
- **Personnel:** helps prepare the annual and four-year principal evaluation, develops recommendations for hiring a principal, and prepares advisory recommendations for the principal on staffing issues.
- **Agenda:** develops the monthly meeting agenda.
- **Special Education:** advises the LSC on issues related to special education.
- **Parent Involvement:** develops and supports programs to increase parent involvement.
- **Facilities:** advises the LSC on facilities issues.
- **Safety and Discipline:** advises the LSC on discipline, attendance, school safety issues, etc.
- **Other committees** based on your school's needs.

## **The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**

Some schools have either a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) to help raise funds, provide parent and student activities, and in other ways support the school.

- A **PTA** is a group that is formally affiliated with the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and pays annual dues to the national and the regional organization. See more at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).
- A **PTO** is not affiliated with the national PTA. Any group of parents can organize themselves into a PTO. In order to raise funds, the PTO must apply for and receive not-for-profit status. For more information, see [www.ptotoday.com](http://www.ptotoday.com).

Both PTAs and PTOs are considered outside organizations for the purposes of fundraising in or for the school, and **must have LSC approval prior to any fundraiser**.

For more on the LSC's role in fundraising, please see the CPS Internal Accounts Manual which can be downloaded using this internet address:

[http://clear.cps.k12.il.us/AboutCPS/Departments/finance/Internal\\_Accounts\\_Manual\\_2005\\_Revision.pdf](http://clear.cps.k12.il.us/AboutCPS/Departments/finance/Internal_Accounts_Manual_2005_Revision.pdf).

Note especially pp.5-1, 5-9, 5-17 and 5-19 in the Internal Accounts Manual.

## **The Student Council**

Many elementary school and most high schools have a student council to provide student input into school issues and to offer students an opportunity to experience democratic decision making. LSCs can include a Student Council report as a regular agenda item at LSC meetings, or invite occasional reports on specific issues from Student Council representatives.

# LSC Bylaws

## What are Bylaws?

**Bylaws are the official rules and procedures that govern how an LSC operates.**

- The majority of the rules and procedures for LSCs are specified in the School Reform Act.
- LSC bylaws must adhere to the School Reform Act, other laws, Board rules and policies, and collective bargaining agreements.
- LSC bylaws are **public records** that must be made available upon request.

## What is the LSC's Responsibility for Bylaws?

### Adoption and Amendment

- Most LSCs already have bylaws drafted and adopted by previous LSCs.
- The LSC may appoint a Bylaws Committee to prepare bylaws if there are none, or to make recommendations for amendments to existing bylaws.
- The bylaws should be **reviewed on a regular basis** to update them when there are changes in the law, rules or policies, or when the LSC wishes to modify or add to them to improve operations.
- Bylaws should include a provision for their amendment by a **two-thirds vote**.
- The LSC should provide **public notice** of any plan to amend its bylaws.
- **A copy of the bylaws should be given to each council member**, and a copy should be on file with the Area Office and the Office of School and Community Relations.

### CPS-provided Model Bylaws

- Model LSC Bylaws, drafted by the CPS Law Department to comply with the law and Board rules and policies, are included in the Resources section of this Guide starting on p.4.
- If your LSC wants to alter the CPS-prepared Model Bylaws, it is strongly advised that you **consult with the Law Department** (call 773-553-1700 and ask for a School Law Attorney), to ensure that your revisions are legal.

# Rules of Order

## What are Rules of Order?

**Rules of order are agreed-upon guidelines for running your meetings.**

### **Why have rules for running an LSC meeting?**

Rules of order or procedure, or “parliamentary procedures,” **help people get things done** in meetings. They also help ensure that **all participants are treated fairly and have a chance to be heard.**

### **Special Rules of Order for LSCs**

The best rules of procedure for a specific type of meeting are rules that have been tailored to that type of meeting.

- The Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under Law developed a “Handbook of Model Rules of Procedure for Meetings” just for LSCs. An internet link to this Handbook is included in the Resources section of this Guide on p.4.
- It is strongly recommended that LSCs adopt the Handbook as your rules of order, and include that information in your bylaws.

### **Why not adopt Robert’s Rules of Order?**

Robert’s Rules of Order are much longer and more complicated than are needed for LSC meetings. Also, they are not tailored to the LSC setting and do not necessarily conform to the laws that govern LSCs. For example, the quorum and voting requirements for LSCs are different from the ones specified in Robert’s Rules.

# LSCs Need Information

LSCs cannot be effective if they are not given the basic information they need to do their work.

## At the Organizational Meeting

At the very least, the following documents and information should be part of the information provided to every LSC member at the organizational meeting:

- Official CPS manual for LSCs.
- Information about how to access information from the CPS web site.
- LSC bylaws.
- Copy of current principal's contract.
- School organizational chart with names and duties of staff.
- School visitor and volunteer procedures.
- Most recent state school report card; other school data.
- Contact information for LSC members.
- Current School Improvement Plan (SIPAAA) and budget for the school (called "Final Budget").
- List of budget codes.
- School calendar.
- Minutes for previous LSC meeting.

Many LSCs prepare **3-ring binders** for each member which include space for minutes, reports, and the key documents listed above. If you do not receive this information at the organizational meeting, **make a motion** that the LSC chair should make sure every LSC member has the information on this list in time for the next LSC meeting.

## For every LSC Meeting

LSCs need information *before each meeting* so that you can read it and come to the meeting prepared, and so that meeting time is not spent reading materials that could have been reviewed ahead of time.

Materials that should be available to the LSC prior to each meeting may include:

- Agenda.
- Minutes from the last meeting.
- Principal's report including the status of SIPAAA and budget implementation and the principal's progress meeting performance objectives.
- Any budget proposals or transfer requests.
- Any SIPAAA proposals or amendments.
- Committee reports.
- Internal accounts reports.
- Any correspondence that may require action.
- Materials related to any other action items listed on the agenda.

# LSC Training

- The school reform law requires LSCs to take **eighteen hours of training** within six months of taking office.
- This training is divided into **six mandated two-hour sessions** developed by CPS covering “the basics” of the LSC’s responsibilities and **six additional hours** of flexible training selected by the LSC.
- LSC members who do not receive their training **can be removed from office** by CPS.
- Re-elected LSC members who have already taken the basic six lessons **are not required to repeat them**. They must complete the additional six hours. However, it is very helpful for new and veteran members of an LSC to take the basic training as a group. It can be a good refresher for the veteran members and helps keep everyone on the same page.

## LSC Basic Training – Six Lessons

The school reform law was amended in 1995 to require LSCs to take three days of training in order to carry out their duties most effectively. More than 80 interested groups and individuals participated in developing the curriculum for what became six two-hour lessons in the following areas:

- LSC roles and responsibilities under the law.
- LSC operations (meeting rules and best practices).
- School improvement planning and implementation.
- School budgeting.
- Principal evaluation.
- Principal selection.

LSC basic training is provided on an ongoing basis by the Office of School and Community Relations (a schedule can be found on the OSCR page on the CPS web site, [www.cps.k12.il.us](http://www.cps.k12.il.us)) and by school reform and community groups whose trainers are certified by CPS (see Resources section, pp.43-50).

## Six Hours of LSC-Selected Training

In addition to the six mandated lessons, LSC members must attend six more hours of training. This training may be done as a group or individually, but **must be approved by the LSC**. Some examples of what LSCs and LSC members have done for this additional six hours of training are

- Teacher presentations on school curriculum.
- Workshops on learning standards or looking at school data.
- Speakers on special education, bilingual education, school safety, discipline, or effective parent involvement.
- School improvement planning sessions.
- Site visits to other schools to look at programs your LSC is considering.
- Special training and support during principal selection, budget development, etc.
- Meetings on other issues of importance to your school.
- Neighborhood CAPS or other community meetings.

### **On-the-job training**

The most effective participants in any organization are those who keep up with the latest information in their field and get regular professional development. While it's important to get your basic training early on your term, the most effective training usually happens "on the job" - when you begin using the information you have heard about and studied. This is a great use of your additional six hours.

You may feel the need for more in-depth training or a refresher when you get into the real meat of LSC work. For example, you may not remember enough about principal selection to effectively carry out this complex and important process when your principal suddenly decides to retire!

A wide variety of additional training services is available through the Office of School and Community Relations and local groups listed in the Resources section of this Guide, pp.43-50.

### **Training Credit Forms**

LSC members should receive a training credit form for each lesson completed, including the six additional hours beyond the basic training. The form includes a copy for the LSC member to keep for his or her records, a copy that the LSC member gives to the school office (which must record the credit electronically), and a copy that the trainer submits to the Office of School and Community Relations.

The training credit form for the additional six hours can be signed by the presenter or any other person who can confirm your attendance. If your school office does not have blank training forms for your additional training hours, you can call the Office of School and Community Relations (773-553-1400).

### **LSC Training Fund**

Each year CPS sets aside \$400 per LSC to pay for each LSC's training expenses. LSCs should have a plan for the use of these funds. You will be asked to submit this plan, usually in October, in order to qualify for the \$400.

The funds can be spent on supplies, travel, consultant fees, childcare, light refreshments, etc.



# The Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) are two key state laws that LSCs and every other elected body in Illinois must follow. Both laws are designed to make sure that elected bodies do business in an open manner that allows the public to see and review their actions and hold members accountable.

## According to the Illinois Attorney General:

“It is the public policy of this State that public bodies exist to aid in the conduct of the people’s business and that the people have a right to be informed as to the conduct of their business.” (5 ILCS 120/1)

“The intent of the **Illinois Open Meetings Act** is to ensure that public business is conducted in public view by prohibiting secret deliberations and actions on matters that should be discussed in a public forum.

“The Act reflects the balance between the rights of the public against the needs of government officials to be able to discuss sensitive matters candidly by excepting particular narrowly-construed circumstances under which a meeting may be held in closed session. The Office of the Attorney General understands that access to meetings helps to ensure the accountability of government to its citizens.

“**Illinois’ Freedom of Information Act** is intended to open the government to all citizens by guaranteeing access to governmental records in whatever form they are maintained. The Act maintains a clear preference for access to public documents while still protecting legitimate governmental interests and the privacy rights of individual citizens. The Office of the Attorney General is committed to the free exchange of information and to that end publishes a Guide to the Freedom of Information Act intended to help Illinoisans navigate their way through the Act.

“...it is declared to be the public policy of the State of Illinois that all persons are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government [...] Such access is necessary to enable the people to fulfill their duties of discussing public issues fully and freely, making informed political judgments and monitoring government to ensure that it is being conducted in the public interest.” (5 ILCS 140/1)

“The principal mandate of the Act is found in subsection 3(a), which provides that “[e]ach public body shall make available to any person for inspection or copying all public records.” The remainder of the Act implements this requirement.”

- The requirements of **FOIA** are fairly simple. A summary of the LSC’s responsibilities under FOIA can be found on p. 2-40.
- The requirements of the **OMA** are much more detailed. The LSC’s responsibilities under the OMA follow on the next 8 pages.

# LSCs and the Open Meetings Act (OMA)

## The OMA...

...is designed to ensure that **public business is conducted in public**, except where confidentiality is absolutely necessary.

Under the OMA, **LSCs must**

- Conduct your business in public, closing meetings only where allowed and taking all votes in public.
- Act responsibly in informing the public of when and where meetings will take place and what business will be conducted.
- Keep careful public records of meetings, attendance, and actions.
- Respect the privacy of personnel and students.

## Key provisions of the OMA are:

- The definition of a meeting.
- Advance notice.
- Exceptions allowing closed sessions.
- Public voting.
- Public records.
- Consequences of violating the OMA.

## What is a Meeting?

According to the OMA, a meeting is the gathering of a majority of a quorum of any public body to discuss public business.

- **For LSCs, the majority of a quorum is ALWAYS four.** The school reform law specifies that a quorum for elementary/middle school LSCs is six (6) and a quorum for high schools is seven (7). These numbers never change even if there are vacancies on the LSC. Simple math tells us that **a majority of either 6 or 7 = 4.**
- So, **OMA rules apply any time four or more LSC members get together to discuss LSC business**, and when the majority of a quorum of any LSC committee gets together.
- This applies to **gatherings, telephone conference calls, or group e-mail discussions.**
- The OMA also applies to any **LSC committees.**
- It is important for LSC members to respect the spirit and letter of the law by assuring that **discussions of LSC business take place in public** after giving **advance notice.**
- Social gatherings and LSC training sessions are **not** covered by the OMA as long as there is no deliberative discussion of LSC business.
- See more about **telephone participation** in LSC meetings and e-mail guidelines on p. 2-37.

## Advance Notice: Schedules and Agendas

The public has a right to know in advance when an LSC will meet and what the LSC will discuss and vote on. This is true for all regular, special, emergency, reconvened, or closed session meetings.

### Regular meeting schedule

- LSCs must create a **schedule of regular meetings** for the year at the LSC organizational meeting (which must take place between July 1 and 14<sup>th</sup> every year).
- The annual regular meeting schedule must include the **date, time, and place** of the meetings.
- LSC meetings must be held at a time and place that is accessible to the public.
- Regular meetings may be scheduled on a **holiday**, but a special meeting may not.

### Posting the regular meeting schedule

- The LSC regular meeting schedule must be **posted** in the school.
- If the LSC holds its meetings at a site outside of the school such as a park district building or a community center, the meeting schedule must also be **posted at that site**.
- The schedule must also be provided to any **media outlet** that requests it.
- If the LSC changes its regular meeting schedule, the LSC must give at least **10 days notice of the change** by posting it where the meeting schedule is posted, publicizing it in a general circulation newspaper that serves the school community, and notifying any media outlet that requested the meeting schedule. You do **not** have to give this notice if you are just changing the date of one regular meeting, but only if you are changing the rest of the LSC annual meeting schedule.

### Regular meeting agenda

- In addition to posting the annual meeting schedule, an **agenda for each regular meeting** must be posted at least **48 hours ahead of the meeting time**. A sample agenda is on p.2-61.
- The agenda should list **all items that may be voted on** (see box below).
- The contents of the agenda should reflect what is going to be discussed and acted on at that meeting rather than a “cookie-cutter” agenda to cover all meetings.

### ***Recent change in CPS policy regarding agenda requirements***

In prior CPS LSC training materials and in the training itself, LSCs were told that items not listed on the agenda for a regular meeting could still be voted on. The fact that new business is an allowable agenda item at regular meetings was given as a reason why such items could be brought up. A clear distinction was made at that time between regular meetings and special meetings – that at special meetings, items not listed on the agenda could **not** be voted on.

**This position has changed** due in part to a recent Illinois Appellate Court ruling that **topics under new business may be discussed and deliberated on but not voted on**. As of this writing we are awaiting further clarification from the Illinois Attorney General, and we will update this manual when we receive it. You may call the AG’s Public Access Counselor at 217-524-1503. General contact information for the AG’s office is on p.2-40.

### **Special meetings**

- LSCs may need to meet in between regular meetings to take an action or actions that cannot wait for the next regularly-scheduled meeting. The public must also be given **advance notice** of these special meetings.
- This is done by posting a **meeting announcement and agenda** at least 48 hours before the meeting time. A sample special meeting notice and agenda is on p. 2-62.
- The agenda for the special meeting must **state the purpose of the meeting and what will be voted on**.
- In addition, the school reform law requires that every LSC member receive **written notice** prior to any special meeting, that is, any meeting that is not on the posted schedule of regular meetings.
- The school reform law specifies that special meetings may be called by the chairperson or by four other LSC members. The announcement for such a meeting **does not have to be signed**; however, it is recommended that the names of the members who called the meeting be listed on the notice.

### **True emergencies**

- In case of a true emergency, the LSC may hold a meeting without the required 48 hour notice, but must in any case provide notice as soon as possible to the public and to any media outlet that has requested such notification.

### **Reconvened meetings**

- An LSC may need to end a regular or special meeting before all the necessary business is done. The LSC may decide to reconvene the same meeting at a later date.
- Notice of this reconvened meeting does not need to be posted if the original meeting was open to the public and it takes place within 24 hours of the original meeting or was announced at the original meeting and there is no change in the agenda. Otherwise, the 48 hour notification is required.

### **Canceling meetings**

- From time to time an LSC may have to cancel a meeting.
- Principals do not have the right to cancel a meeting, unless the LSC has voted to allow him or her to do so.
- LSCs may establish **guidelines for canceling a meeting** (who may cancel the meeting, what circumstances would cause a meeting to be canceled, how to notify members and the public).
- The LSC must **notify the public** by posting a notice of the meeting cancellation in public view on school grounds and may, as a courtesy and if possible, send flier to the parents.

## Closed Sessions/Executive Sessions

The OMA allows government bodies to discuss certain matters away from the public where confidentiality may be advisable in order to protect the public interest or the privacy of individuals. The OMA lists **24 possible reasons** to close a meeting. Individual bodies **may not close a meeting for any other reason** beside those listed.

These exceptions **allow but do not require** a closed meeting discussion.

The key points LSCs should keep in mind are:

- The LSC **must take a public vote** to close a meeting.
- The motion to close the meeting **must include the exact language** of the exception from the OMA. This language follows on pp. 2-36- 37 in the numbered sections.
- Most exceptions that LSCs are likely to use are listed on the following 3 pages.
- All closed sessions **must be video or audio taped**.
- **No action** (votes) may be taken in a closed meeting.

*\*Note:* PURE disagrees with the language of the CPS LSC Reference Guide 2007, Chapter 2 p.18, which suggests that LSCs may only use five of the 24 exceptions: (“A council may only go into a closed/executive session if there is a need to....”). Nothing in the OMA restricts LSCs from using any of the allowable exceptions and, as is clear in the list on the following two pages, there are many exceptions beyond the five mentioned by CPS which might relate to LSC business.

In addition, because the OMA requires that the motion to go into closed session must include the ***exact wording of the exception used***, LSCs would violate the law if they used the language of the five points as the CPS LSC Reference Guide lists them.

## Six Categories of OMA Exceptions

“The Guide to the Illinois Open Meetings Act,” prepared by the Illinois Attorney General, organizes the allowed exceptions into six useful categories which are listed below with the language of the specific exceptions most likely to affect LSCs and *the number of each exception as it is listed in the OMA*.

### 1. Employment/appointment matters

1) “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.”

- For LSCs, this exception might be used during discussions of the principal’s evaluation, renewing a principal’s contract, or hiring a new principal, but not for discussions of the processes and procedures for these activities.
- Also, while the LSC does not have authority over school staff discipline, assignment, evaluation, or other employment matters, the LSC does have a duty to assure that these actions are carried out properly by the principal. These discussions may also be relevant during the course of principal evaluation. In any case, discussion of these issues should be held in closed session to preserve the staff member’s privacy.

3) “The selection of a person to fill a public office, as defined in this Act, including a vacancy in a public office, when the public body is given power to appoint under law or ordinance, or the discipline, performance or removal of the occupant of a public office, when the public body is given power to remove the occupant under law or ordinance.”

- LSCs might use this exception when discussing candidates to fill an LSC vacancy or whether to proceed with removing an LSC member for non-attendance (see p.2-47).

### 2. Business matters

6) The setting of a price for sale or lease of property owned by the public body.

- Some LSCs lease their building space or parking lot and might use this exception when discussing financial terms of the lease.

### 3. Legal matters

11) Litigation, when an action against, affecting or on behalf of the particular public body has been filed and is pending before a court or administrative tribunal, or when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent, in which case the basis for the finding shall be recorded and entered into the minutes of the closed meeting.

- The most likely example of this exception for LSCs would be a potential or actual challenge to the LSC’s decision to renew or not to renew the principal’s contract (arbitration - see p.1-20 in Lesson 1). However, LSCs have been involved in other types of litigation.

### 4. Security/criminal matters

8) Security procedures and the use of personnel and equipment to respond to an actual, a threatened, or a reasonably potential danger to the safety of employees, students, staff, the public, or public property.

- LSCs must be sure that the school has an up-to-date safety plan and might discuss aspects of the plan in a closed session meeting.

## **5. School matters**

9) Student disciplinary cases.

10) The placement of individual students in special education programs and other matters relating to individual students.

- While the LSC does not have authority over individual student discipline cases or educational placement, the LSC does have a duty to assure that discipline, placements, and other matters are carried out properly. If individual student cases are relevant to LSC discussions of school discipline or other policies or during the course of principal evaluation, for example, that part of the discussion should be held in closed session to preserve the student's privacy.

## **6. Miscellaneous**

21) Discussion of minutes lawfully closed under this Act, whether for purposes of approval by the body of the minutes or semi-annual review of the minutes as mandated by section 2.06.

- Like all other public bodies in Illinois, LSCs are required to keep records of all closed session meetings and must approve those minutes and review them twice a year to decide whether they should remain closed. Discussions of these minutes may be held in closed session.

## **Confidentiality**

While there is no provision for sanctioning any member who violates the privacy of the closed session, it is very important for LSC members to act responsibly with confidential information.

## Public Voting

An unchanging OMA rule is that all actions must be voted on **in public**. This means

- No secret ballots.
- No proxy votes (votes cast by someone other than the member him/herself).
- No voting (taking final action) in closed session.

### Telephone participation in meetings

There may be times when an LSC member is physically unable to attend a meeting due to an illness, disability, inability to arrange for childcare, travel out of the city, etc. – but could participate by telephone. LSC member participation by telephone is allowed under the following circumstances:

- The LSC member must be present by phone for the **entire meeting** (members aren't allowed to "phone in" their votes...).
- The member's voice must be **audible** to the public.
- The **agenda must state that telephonic participation may be used at the meeting** - you may wish to put this note on each agenda on a routine basis so that you may legally use a speaker phone if needed.
- The LSC's **bylaws must specify that telephonic participation may be used** under the circumstances mentioned in the first three bullet points above.

### E-mail and the OMA

The Open Meetings Act does apply to e-mail discussions among 4 or more LSC members, even though it was written before the internet was invented! It's important to make sure that e-mail discussions don't cross over the line from simply providing information or arranging for a meeting date to a discussion of school business by more than three members, which the OMA says must be done in public. Here are some tips from the *American School Board Journal*, July 2002, modified for LSC use:

- Develop a policy for LSC e-mail communication that guards against online "meetings" of four or more LSC members (sample policy is in the Resources section of this Guide, p.13).
- Be sure not to exclude LSC members who do not use e-mail regularly.
- Treat all e-mail as potentially subject to the Freedom of Information Act, and so possibly public information.
- Keep public and personal communication separate.
- Save all school-related e-mail in a file.



## Public Records

The OMA requires that public bodies keep records of their actions. This includes written minutes of open meetings and audio or video recordings of closed session meetings (in the past, bodies were required to keep written minutes of closed session meetings as well; it is expected that this requirement will be reinstated). LSCs should keep a binder of LSC minutes in a place that's accessible to the public, such as the school office or library.

### Content of Minutes

Written minutes must include

- Date, time, and place of the meeting.
- Members present and absent.
- A summary of discussion on all matters proposed, deliberated, or decided, and a record of any votes taken.

### Status of minutes

- Minutes of **open meetings** must be available to the public within 7 days after they are approved.
- Minutes of **closed session meetings** must be reviewed at least twice a year to determine if they should continue to be closed.
- Audio or video **recordings of closed session meetings** will only be heard or viewed outside of the LSC if there is an action brought against the LSC under the OMA. These recordings may be destroyed after 18 months if the LSC votes to do so, and if there are written minutes approved by the LSC of the recorded closed session meeting.

### Taping by the public

- The Open Meetings Act specifically permits members of the public to videotape or record all but closed sessions of LSC meetings.
- LSCs may set guidelines for use of video cameras and other recording equipment so that the recording does not interfere with the orderly process of the meeting. The LSC chair may require that a person recording the meeting cease that activity if the recording disrupts the meeting.
- Recording equipment should be set up before the meeting starts.
- Unlike recordings by the LSC (for the secretary's minutes or other reasons), recordings by members of the public are private property and not public records.

## Consequences of Violating the OMA

LSCs should take their responsibilities under the OMA seriously, and the evidence is strong that they do. To date, no LSC has been charged with a violation of the OMA.

### Reporting a possible violation

If any person, or the Attorney General, believes that an LSC has violated the OMA, they have 60 days from the date of the meeting in question to file a civil action with the Circuit Court of Cook County.

If you believe there has been a violation of the OMA, you may report it to the Attorney General at the Chicago address below.

If the court finds a violation of the OMA, it may 1) issue an order requiring that the meeting be open to the public; 2) grant an injunction against future violations of the Act, 3) order the body to make the minutes of the improperly closed meeting available to the public, and 4) declare null and void any final action taken in an improperly closed meeting.

Criminal penalties for OMA violations also exist; violating the OMA is a Class C misdemeanor and carries a possible penalty of a \$1500 fine and up to 30 days imprisonment. Charges must be brought by the Attorney General. Again, no LSC has ever been charged to date.

### LSC case

The Chicago School Reform Board of Trustees filed a lawsuit in 1998 against the Gale Academy Local School Council and the principal the LSC had selected. The lawsuit was an effort to nullify the principal contract based on allegations by CPS that the LSC violated the OMA during the selection process. The courts upheld the Gale LSC's decision. In reference to the Gale case, the Attorney General's "Guide to the OMA" states, "Ordinarily, an action may not be voided because of a technical notice violation, nor may it be voided because it was discussed or matters related to it were deliberated in an improperly closed meeting."

### Contacts for the Illinois Attorney General's Office

Attorney General Lisa Madigan has appointed a **Special Access Counselor** to provide information about and monitor compliance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. You may contact the Public Access Counselor at the telephone number and address below.

Copies of the full "Guide to the Illinois Open Meetings Act," the complete Open Meetings Act law, and a schedule of trainings on the Open Meetings Act are available through the Attorney General's office.

See [www.http://www.ag.state.il.us/government/open\\_meetings.html](http://www.ag.state.il.us/government/open_meetings.html)

Office of the Attorney General

Chicago Main Office

100 West Randolph Street

Chicago, IL 60601

(312) 814-3000

TTY: (312) 814-3374

# LSCs and the Freedom of Information Act

## The FOIA...

...is intended to provide any person with full and complete access to records of public bodies.

Under FOIA, LSCs must provide

- Information about the LSC.
- Official acts of the LSC.
- LSC policies.

The LSC must provide access to all public records of the LSC, unless exempted by FOIA, including the following information, and make it available for inspection and copying:

- School Improvement Plan Advancing Academic Achievement (SIPAAA).
- School Budget and other financial records.
- Annual School Report Card.
- Annual standardized test results (but not individual student scores).
- Approved minutes of open LSC meetings.
- Minutes of LSC Committee meetings.
- LSC communications, letters, and memos.
- LSC records and reports.
- Tapes, photos, recordings, and data processing records authorized by the LSC, with the exception of video and audio recording of closed sessions.
- Facility reports.
- All LSC candidate nomination documents excluding the Telephone Disclosure Form.

## How should the LSC respond to an FOIA request?

As with any public body, the LSC must make its public records available to **any person** for inspection or copying. The LSC may wish to contact the Freedom of Information Officer at CPS (773-553-1600) for guidance and advice about your responsibilities related to any request.

Some of the specific rules include:

- Complying with or denying the request within seven working days after its receipt.
- If the LSC cannot comply within that period, extend the time for an additional seven working days by giving written notice and stating the reason for the extension.
- If the LSC denies the FOIA request, it must be in writing and include the reason for denial, the name and position of each person responsible for the denial.
- For more information, contact the Law Department at (773) 553-1700.

## Can the LSC make an FOIA request?

The FOIA applies to the Board of Education and other public bodies. The Board has established specific procedures for obtaining access to information in its possession and control. For more information, contact the Department of Communications at (773) 553-1600. In addition, the LSC may wish to file such a request as a last resort if the principal fails or refuses to provide requested information the LSC needs to carry out its responsibilities.

# LSC Quorum and Voting Rules

## Quorum Rules

A quorum is the minimum number of members of a governing body who must be present at the meeting to conduct business. For LSCs, the quorum requirement is set by law and does not change if there are vacancies on the LSC. A quorum is always...

**7** for a high school LSC

**6** for an elementary school LSC

- The quorum requirement **never** changes.
- The LSC cannot conduct business without a quorum.

### Special quorum rule

The principal and, in high school LSCs, the student representative, **may not be counted for determining a quorum** (and may not vote) on the following issues:

- Selecting a principal
- Evaluating a principal
- Renewal of principal's contract
- Approving additional contract criteria
- Submitting three principal candidate names to the Chief Executive Officer

### Here's an example of how that works

Let's say that at a high school LSC meeting, there are eight members present including the principal and the student. The LSC's agenda calls for a vote to establish a principal evaluation committee. That vote cannot take place. The student and principal cannot be counted for a quorum, so, for the purposes of that vote, there are only **six** members, one short of the quorum requirement for high school LSCs. The LSC must skip that vote and move on to other items that do not involve the principals' contract.

## Voting Rules

### All LSC votes must take place in public, at an open meeting.

- Secret ballots and proxy votes are **not** allowed.
- Votes may be done by roll call, show of hands, or voice vote.
- For important decisions such as principal selection or approval of the SIPAAA or budget transfers, roll call should be taken and recorded.

### Other voting rules

- The principal cannot vote on matters related to his/her own contract. This includes principal evaluation, retention and selection matters.
- The student on a high school LSC may participate in discussions about but may not vote on any personnel matters. This includes principal evaluation, retention or selection and any personnel issue related to any other school employee.
- According to the Board of Education Ethics Code, LSC members with a relative employed at the school must abstain on votes on the school improvement plan, school budget and other votes that impact their relative's employment.
- Voting requirements for regular and special motions are listed in the charts on p. 2-44.

## Regular and Special Motions

### Regular motions...

- Require the “yes” votes of the majority of the membership **currently serving** to pass.
- Therefore, you need to know how many **true vacancies** there are to determine this number.
- You have a true vacancy only when someone resigns, is automatically removed or is removed after due process (see the **LSC member eligibility and replacement** section, p.2-47)
- A true vacancy is not the same as people absent or people whose eligibility is under question for one reason or another.
- See the “Voting Rules for Regular Motions” chart on the next page to determine how many votes your LSC needs to pass a regular motion.

### Special motions...

- Require a certain number of “yes” votes specified by law to pass.
- The number of votes required to pass a special motion never changes.
- To **directly select a new principal** always requires 7 (seven) yes votes.
- To **transfer budget allocations within a fund** requires 7 (seven) yes votes in an elementary school and 8 (eight) yes votes in a high school.
- To request that the Board remove the principal for cause requires 7 (seven) yes votes.
- Refer to the “Voting Rules for Special Motions” chart on the next page to make sure you have the required number of votes for these special motions.

# Charts: Voting Rules for Regular and Special Motions

## Voting Rules for Regular Motions

These numbers are based on the number of true vacancies on your LSC.

Members currently serving	Number of vacancies <b>HIGH SCHOOL LSC</b>	Number of votes <b>required</b> to pass a regular motion <b>HIGH SCHOOL LSC</b>	Number of vacancies <b>ELEMEN-TARY/ MIDDLE LSC</b>	Number of votes <b>required</b> to pass a regular motion <b>ELEMEN-TARY LSC</b>
12	0	7	--	---
11	1	6	0	6
10	2	6	1	6
9	3	5	2	5
8	4	5	3	5
7	5	4	4	4
6	6	no quorum	5	4
5	7	no quorum	6	no quorum

## Voting Rules for Special Motions

These numbers are set by law and never change.

Specific legal exception to regular voting rules	Number of votes <b>required</b> to pass motion- <b>HIGH SCHOOL LSC</b>	Number of votes <b>required</b> to pass motion <b>ELEMEN-TARY/ MIDDLE LSC</b>
Direct selection of new contract principal	7	7
Transfer of funds	8	7
Request that the Board remove the principal for cause	7	7

## Voting on Specific Motions

### Motion to approve the school improvement plan

- This motion requires another member to second it.
- This motion is debatable.
- This is a **regular motion**: to pass, it requires a “yes” vote of the majority of the serving members.

**Example:** *“I move that the school improvement plan for the 2006-2008 school years, dated as of March 20, 2006, be approved **in all respects**.”*

**Example:** *“I move that the school improvement plan for the 2006-2008 school years, dated as of March 20, 2006, be approved **as amended**.”*

### Motion to approve the school budget

- This motion requires another member to second it.
- This motion is debatable.
- This is a **regular motion**: to pass, it requires a “yes” vote of the majority of the serving members.

**Example:** *“I move that the school budget for the 2006-2007 school year dated as of April 16, 2006 be approved **as presented**.”*

**Example:** *“I move that the school budget for the 2006-2007 school year dated as of April 16, 2006 be approved **as amended**.”*

### Motions to amend allocation of discretionary funds in a school budget

#### Motion to transfer previously allocated discretionary funds

- This motion requires another member to second it.
- This motion is debatable.
- This is a **special motion**: it requires at least (7) seven votes to pass for an elementary school LSC and (8) eight votes to pass for a high school LSC.

**Example:** *“I move to transfer the previously allocated SGSA funds in the amount of \$3,000 from (budget line) to (budget line).”*

#### Motion to allocate new, rollover and/or previously unallocated Funds

- This motion requires another member to second it.
- This motion is debatable.
- This is a **regular motion**: it requires a “yes” vote of the majority of the serving members.

**Example:** *“I move that the previously unallocated SGSA rollover funds in the amount of \$5,000 be allocated to (budget line).”*

### **Motion to select a new principal**

- This motion requires another member to second it.
- This motion is debatable.
- This is a **special motion**: it requires at least (7) seven votes to pass for either an elementary school or a high school LSC.

**Example:** *“I move that the Garden LSC offer a four-year contract to Ms. Perez.”*

### **Motions to approve the principal performance evaluation, retain the current principal, approve additional contract criteria, open the principal selection process, and submit principal candidate names to the CEO**

- These motions require another member to second them.
- These motions are debatable.
- These are **regular motions**: they require a “yes” vote of the majority of the serving members, **not including the principal and the student representative**.

### **Examples:**

*“I move that the annual principal evaluation of Mr. Smith be approved as presented.”*

*“I move that the Garden LSC renew Mr. Smith’s contract for another four years.”*

*“I move that the Garden LSC submit an announcement of a principal vacancy to the CPS personnel bulletin and begin our principal selection process.”*

*“I move that we add the contract criteria proposed by the personnel committee.”*

*“I move that we submit the following names to the CEO as candidates for principal, in this order: Ms. Perez, Mr. Smith, and Dr. White.”*

**Remember that there are special quorum and voting rules for issues relating to the principal’s contract (see p.2-42, 43).**



## LSC eligibility, removal, and replacement

- All LSC members must comply with LSC eligibility, training, ethics, conflict of interest, and criminal background requirements, and filing of ethics, economic, and criminal disclosure statements.
- Relatives of the principal may not be LSC members.
- People who have been convicted of certain felony crimes may not be LSC members.
- You can find details of all these requirements on the following pages and in the related Board Rules included in the Resources section of this Guide on pp.14-25.

### Eligibility

#### LSC parent members

- Must be the biological, adoptive, step- or foster parent or court-conferred legal guardian of a child enrolled in the school.
- Must not be an employee of the Board. Parents employed by the Board **may** run as a candidate for LSC parent member as long as they resign from that position by June 30 (i.e. before LSC members take office).
- Must not be a relative of the principal.
- LSC parent members who voluntarily transfer their children from the school automatically lose their seats on the LSC as of the date of the voluntary transfer.
- LSC parent members whose students are transferred **involuntarily** have the **right to a hearing** on their status and continue as voting members of the LSC until a ruling on their status has been made.
- If a child graduates during the LSC term of an LSC parent member, and the parent has no other child enrolled in the school, the parent loses eligibility as of the CPS-determined last day of school (not the school graduation date).
- Parents who believe they will no longer have a child enrolled at the school by June 30 due to graduation may run in the April election as an LSC community member if they live in the voting boundary of the school. However, if the child fails to graduate, the parent elected as an LSC community member will not be seated, and that community position will be declared vacant.

#### LSC community members

- Must live in the voting area of the school.
- May not be the parent or guardian of a student in the school.
- Must not be an employee of the Board. Community residents employed by the Board **may** run as candidates for LSC community member as long as they resign from that position by June 30 (i.e. before all LSC members take office).
- Must not be a relative of the principal.

#### LSC teacher members

- Must be a certified teacher assigned to perform more than half of his/her duties at the school.
- Assistant principals are not eligible to be LSC teacher members.
- LSC teacher members who voluntarily transfer out of the school or resign automatically lose their seat on the LSC as of the date of the voluntary transfer or resignation.
- LSC teacher members who are transferred **involuntarily** have **right to a hearing** on their status

and continue as voting members of the LSC until a ruling on their status has been made.

### **LSC student members**

- Must be a full-time student at the school.

## **Procedures for Removing LSC Members**

### **Removal by the LSC**

An LSC member may be removed from the LSC by a majority vote of the LSC if the LSC member has missed **three regular meetings in a row or five regular meetings in a twelve-month period**.

Emergency, special, or committee meetings do not count.

### **Due Process**

- The LSC member in question must be notified personally or by certified mail to his/her last known address of the LSC's intent to remove him/her at least 7 days prior to the vote.
- The LSC member must be given the opportunity to explain his/her actions and vote on the question of his/her removal from the LSC.

### **Removal by the Board of Education**

An LSC member may be removed by the Board if

- The LSC member has **failed to complete the required 3-day LSC training program**.
- The LSC member **fails to file the required disclosure statements** to the Board of Trustees or the county (see Criminal Conviction Disclosure Form and Board Rule 6-30 - Removal of Local School Council Members for Certain Criminal Convictions or Failure to Disclose Criminal Convictions, in the Resources section of this Guide, p.22-25).
- The LSC member **has become ineligible to serve and a challenge to his/her eligibility has been found to be valid** (see eligibility requirements, p.2-47-48, and Board Rule 6-28: LSC Removal Procedures, in the Resources section of this Guide, p.14).
- The LSC member has been found to have **violated the Board of Trustees ethics code** (see Board of Education Ethics Code, internet link on p.4, and Board Rule 6-29 - Challenges to LSC Eligibility for Ethics in the Resources section, p.19).

### **Due Process**

- The LSC member must be notified personally or by certified mail to his/her last known address of the Board's reasons for and intent to remove him/her at least 7 days prior to the vote.
- The LSC member must be given the opportunity to explain his/her actions before an impartial hearing officer.

## Filling Vacancies

### Parent and community vacancies

- The LSC appoints eligible persons to fill parent or community vacancies by the vote of the majority of members currently serving.
- All candidates for appointment to LSC vacancies must comply with LSC disclosure requirements (criminal disclosure, Board economic interest statement).
- The LSC determines what process to use to recruit and consider candidates to fill vacancies.
- The LSC may go into closed session to discuss the qualifications of candidates to fill LSC vacancies.

### Teacher and student vacancies

- Teacher and student vacancies are filled in the same manner as the original vote: the LSC and the principal conduct a non-binding advisory poll using a secret ballot.
- The name of the two top vote-getters are sent to the Board which will appoint the teacher or student member.

### Teacher temporary vacancy

If a teacher representative is absent from employment at the school for an extended and defined period of time due to illness, disability, leave of absence, the initiation of dismissal proceedings, or any other reason, the Board will declare a temporary vacancy and appoint an interim teacher representative following a non-binding poll until such time as the teacher representative returns to his or her duties at the school or for the remainder of the term. The principal shall notify the Chief Executive's Office of a teacher representative's extended absence. The CEO shall certify that a temporary vacancy exists. When a vacancy is certified, the Office of the Chief Executive Officer shall issue a letter to the principal and the LSC advising the school to initiate the advisory poll.

## Loss of Quorum

It is important for LSCs to monitor your membership status and to fill any vacancies in a timely manner so that you can continue to do the business you were elected to do. LSCs with multiple vacancies often find it hard to get a quorum to have a meeting or enough votes to pass motions. This becomes especially problematic if, for example, the LSC needs to select a principal which requires seven votes.

If an LSC has so many vacancies that it no longer has enough members to make up a quorum (that is, if an elementary school LSC is down to five or fewer members or a high school LSC is down to six or fewer members) the Chief Education Officer is empowered by the Board to take over the authority for approving the budget and budget transfers until the Board authorizes a special election, or the next regular election (see Board Rule 6-31 in the Resources section of this Guide, p.26).

- Multiple vacancies are most likely to happen as a result of graduation, when members who are parents of graduates and who have no other children enrolled at the school will be removed automatically as of the last day of school. The last day of school is determined by CPS, and is **not** the same as the date of graduation. Check the official CPS school calendar for the official last day

of school.

- You can deal with this situation by planning ahead. Recruit some new parent members and make sure they are at the last LSC meeting before the last day of school. If there are any current vacancies, fill them first. Then the parents whose children are graduating should present their resignation letters, one at a time. After each resignation, the LSC should vote in a new parent to fill that vacancy. That way, the departing parents can help fill their positions and keep the LSC going.

## LSC IDs

Every LSC member gets the same kind of background check as school staff, LSC members are school officials, and you play an important role in the school. It just makes sense for LSC members to have a school **identification badge** similar to that provided for school staff. LSC IDs first became available in 2003.

### **This is how it works**

You should get a letter from your school on school letterhead, identifying you as an LSC member from that school. There's a sample letter below.

Take the letter, and a smile, to the CPS Central Office, 125 S. Clark Street. Check in at the lobby security desk and ask where to go to get your LSC ID.

### **LSCs can prepare the letters**

While it is the principal's responsibility to provide the letter you need to get your ID, this may not happen. An official letter from the LSC secretary or chair should be sufficient if you are unable to obtain a letter from the principal.

### **ID not required!!!**

You are not required to have an ID! This is just a service for those LSC members who wish to have a school ID.

### **Sample letter**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Safety and Security  
Chicago Public Schools  
125 S. Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60603

This letter is to verify that \_\_\_\_\_ is a current sitting member  
of the Local School Council at \_\_\_\_\_ School.

Signed,  
School principal or LSC chair

# The LSC Election

## When are LSC Elections Held?

- LSC elections for parent, community and teacher representatives take place every even-numbered year (2006, 2008, etc.) on spring report card pick-up days.
- This is usually a Wednesday for elementary schools and Thursday for high schools.
- The polls are open from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm.
- Year round schools set their own election date.
- High school student representatives, who serve for only one year, are selected in a student poll during the 22<sup>nd</sup> week of the “off-year,” the odd-numbered year when there is no election.

## Who votes?

- **School parents and neighbors** may cast up to 5 votes for parent and community representatives.
- **School staff** are polled to select their teacher representatives who are then appointed by the Board.
- **High school students** are polled every year to select their student representatives who are then appointed by the Board.

## Who can run for the LSC?

The LSC consists of **11** members at elementary schools and **12** members at high schools.

- **6 parents/guardians** of students currently enrolled at the school; parent members cannot be Board of Education employees (after June 30 of the election year) or relatives of the principal.
- **2 community residents** 18 years of age or older who live in the attendance area of the school but will not have any children enrolled at the school as of June 30 of the election year; community representatives cannot be Board of Education employees (after June 30 of the election year) or relatives of the principal.
- **2 certified teachers** who work more than half their time at the school.
- **1 full-time student** at each high school.
- The principal of the school is automatically seated as a member.

Non-citizens **may** run as candidates and vote.

## LSC Nomination Procedures

You must fill out candidate nomination forms which are available at

- Your local school.
- CPS central and Area offices.
- Chicago Public Libraries.
- Your alderman’s office.
- The offices of many community and advocacy groups.
- Online on the web page of the Office of School and Community Relations on the CPS web site, [www.cps.k12.il.us](http://www.cps.k12.il.us).

## Candidate Forms

### The forms will ask the following information:

- Candidate Name, address, type of candidacy and proof of eligibility.
  - You must show **2** forms of ID.
  - Parents must be listed in school enrollment records or bring other evidence of eligibility as a parent candidate such as a tax return or birth certificate.
  - Community residents must provide proof that they live in the school voting area.
- Statement of Economic Interest.
  - Asks you to declare any economic interests you may have at the school. If you have a relative who works at the school, you will have to abstain on voting on the SIPAAA and budget.
- Criminal Conviction Disclosure.
  - Asks you to disclose convictions for specific sex and drug crimes which will disqualify a candidate for LSC.
- Telephone Number Disclosure.
  - Asks for your phone number to be used by CPS and otherwise kept confidential.
- Teacher or Student Information form for teacher and student candidates only.
- Candidate Statement: If you wish, you may also file a candidate statement, a one-page statement that you write describing your qualifications and reasons for wanting to be a local school council member. You may add your picture to this page and present your statement in languages other than English. This statement will be posted in the school.

Make a copy of all your forms or ask the school to make a copy for you. When you submit your forms, the school must give you a signed, dated receipt.

## Nomination Deadline

Nominations are usually accepted between Dec. 1 and sometime in March a few weeks prior to the spring election. Parents should receive a letter from the school principal informing them of nomination deadlines and election dates.

## Candidate Literature Distribution Day

Parent and community candidates may prepare one 8x11 page campaign flyer for distribution, usually on the Monday of election week. You must:

- Bring enough copies of this flyer for every child in the school
- Divide the copies into piles of 35.
- Have your flyers in to the school no later than the specified deadline, usually **3:00 pm on the Friday before the election.**

Note: The school is not allowed to create or copy flyers for any candidate or slate.

## Election Procedures for Parent and Community Representatives

### You may vote at any school where you are eligible.

- You do **not** need to be a U.S. citizen to vote.
- Schools which are not accessible must provide curb-side voting for persons with disabilities.
- If you are over age 18 you may vote at all schools in whose election boundaries you live. This usually includes at least one elementary school and a high school. You may also live in the area of a middle school or a multi-area or magnet school. Call the LSC Election Hotline at 773/553-1400 to find out where you can vote.
- Parents may vote at all schools where they have a child enrolled.
- You need 2 forms of ID, including one from the following list which includes your address:
  - Driver's License
  - Employer ID
  - State of Illinois ID
  - Current lease
  - Court document
  - Library card
  - Social Security card
  - Current utility bill
  - Student ID
  - IDPA Card
  - Credit Card
  - Voter Registration Card
  - Other government ID
  - Student birth certificate
  - MediPlan/Medicaid card

### You must vote in person by secret ballot

- Schools will provide voting booths and ballots.
- No proxy or absentee votes are allowed (you may **not** vote on behalf of a spouse, parent, etc.)

### Vote for up to 5 candidates

- You may vote for any combination of parent and community candidates.
- You may not vote more than once for any one candidate.
- **Do not vote for more than five candidates:** if you do, your ballot will be discarded.



## **Selection of Teacher and Student Representatives**

The 2 teacher representatives and 1 student high school representative are appointed by the Board after non-binding advisory polls.

### **Teachers**

- The teacher non-binding advisory poll is conducted on the same day and in the same place and manner as the parent and community election.
- **All** staff who work at the school the majority of their time may vote in that school's teacher poll **except** that, according to CPS, neither the principal nor the assistant principal may vote.
- Voting is done by secret ballot; there will be no proxy or absentee voting.
- The principal will submit the top four vote-getters' names to the Board of Education.

### **Students**

- Each high school LSC shall develop election procedures, ballots, and a summary report form for results of the student non-binding advisory poll.
- Sometime during the 22<sup>nd</sup> week of school, the high school principal will conduct a student non-binding advisory poll.
- ▶ The principal will submit the top two vote-getters' names to the Board of Education.

### **Appointment by the Board**

Generally at the June Board of Education meeting following the LSC election, the Board shall appoint all teachers to two-year terms and all students to one-year terms beginning July 1 of that year.

## **Election Responsibilities of Current LSC**

Prepare for a fair, inclusive, successful LSC election!

### **Establish LSC Election Judge Recruitment Committee**

- The current LSC may appoint an Election Judge Recruitment Committee for the purpose of recruiting election judges.
- No member of this committee can be a candidate or an announced supporter of a candidate at the school.
- If the LSC does not form a recruitment committee, the principal and LSC Chair may appoint such a committee. Judge applications will be collected by the school and forwarded to the Area Office.
- Election judges will receive a stipend for the day of service.
- All judges must receive training.
- Election judges may not be under age 18, a student at that school, a Board employee working at that school, an LSC candidate at that school, a candidate's immediate family member or reside in the same house as any LSC candidate or the principal at that school.
- The deadline for applying to be an election judge is usually 3-4 weeks prior to the election.

### **Early in the year (there is usually a January deadline)**

- Develop a plan to publicize election,
- Set date for Candidates' Forum (which must be held between certain dates specific by CPS), and
- Set date for post-election LSC meeting to certify election results (which must be done by a date specified by CPS, generally about a week after the election).

### **Hold a Candidates' Forum**

- The current LSC must set a time, place, and agenda for a candidates' forum to be held during a week prior to the election as specified by CPS.
- The place of the forum must be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- **All** candidates must be notified of the forum and invited to participate.
- A lottery for ballot position must be held at the forum; it is suggested that this lottery take place first on the agenda and that the list be recorded and used as the order of speakers.

### **Coordinate with Report Card Pick-Up**

- Develop a plan to welcome and guide to the polling place all parents entering the school for Report Card Pick-up.
- It is recommended that parents vote before picking up report cards.

### **Assure removal of all campaign materials the day before the election**

- Develop a plan to remove all campaign materials from inside the school no later than 3 pm the day before the election, and also before student election day in the high schools.

### **Certify Election Results**

- Hold a meeting shortly after the election to certify election results.

## Principal's Election Responsibilities

### Public Information

- Post information about nomination and challenge procedures, election time line, and candidate eligibility.
- Post a map showing school attendance/voting boundaries.
- Send two letters home to all parents.
  - **First letter** in early December includes LSC nomination and challenge procedures, election timeline, and candidate eligibility requirements.
  - **Second letter** after nominations close includes list of all candidates, information about the Candidates' Forum, election date, voting hours and location, and a reminder to bring two forms of ID to vote.
- Within 24 hours of the first candidate filing, post in a public place a list of candidates and the original copies of candidate statements.
- Update public candidate list daily.
- Assist the LSC in presenting a Candidates' Forum.
- Prepare Literature Distribution Day.
- By a date specified by CPS, post candidate ballot list in lottery order; candidates inspect list and notify principal of any errors by **3 pm that day**.
- By the date specified by CPS, after any pre-election challenges are decided, post revised candidate ballot list with names in lottery order; candidates again have until 3 pm to notify principal of errors;
- By 4 pm post corrected list.
- Post election results as soon as the count is complete.

### Election procedures

- Assure that no school resources are used to promote any candidate or slate.
- Provide and collect nomination papers; forward photocopies of the forms to Area Office.
- Accept applications for election judges, forward names to the AIO by date specified by CPS.
- Distribute 6 pollwatcher credentials to each candidate at the Candidates' Forum.
- Prepare for the election judges a complete list of all staff eligible to vote for teacher representative (this includes only staff who work at least a majority of their time at the school excluding the principal and assistant principal).
- Provide a list of all students enrolled in the school.
- In high schools, conduct student non-binding advisory poll during 22<sup>nd</sup> week of school between dates specified by CPS (all student campaign material must be removed the day before the student poll).
- Receive all ballots and place in security envelopes in the school safe.
- Forward security envelopes to Area Office.

### Limitation of Principal's Role on Election Day

During the election, the principal's role is limited to that of resource person; election judges and monitors make all determinations about the election.

## Electioneering

As with other elections, electioneering **may** take place outside of the school, at least 100 feet from any school entrance.

- **No electioneering is to occur anywhere *inside* the school.** This means that staff may not promote any candidate or give advice on what candidates to choose. Clear signs stating these policies should be posted in several locations in every school. Because this election is on report-card pick-up day, it is particularly important to make it clear that no electioneering is to occur inside of the school at all on election day.
- If there are problems on election day, you should call the Election Hotline which should be well-publicized..

## Use of School Resources for LSC Candidates Forbidden

It is expressly forbidden for anyone to use resources of the school to endorse or promote any candidate or group of candidates (slate).

- This includes both **people and material resources** such as paper, staff time during working hours, copying machines, telephones, or space for meetings for particular candidates or slates.
- This also means that staff may not recommend or endorse candidates inside of the school at all, and specifically not during report card pick-up parent conferences on the day of the election.
- Staff who either use school resources or allow school resources to be used in this manner may be subject to discipline including suspension of up to 30 days without pay. If you believe that this rule is being violated at your school, call the CPS Law Department at 773/ 553-1700.

## Poll Watchers

Poll watchers holding valid credentials are able to witness all phases of the LSC election.

- Candidates may serve as their own poll watchers.
- Each candidate is given six poll watcher credentials.
- Civic non-profit groups are allowed 1 credential for every school in its service area and every multi-area school.
- Each candidate or group may have one poll watcher in the polling place at any given time.
- Poll watchers may observe the process of voter identification, inspect the voting stations when not in use, and observe set up, counting, and recording procedures.
- Poll watchers should call to the attention of or make objections to the election judges if there is a problem. If the problem is not remedied, make note of and report irregularities to the Election Hotline.

## Pre-election Challenges to Candidate Eligibility

- Pre-election challenge forms are available at the school office, the Area Offices, the CPS central office, and from some community groups.
- Challenges must include specific charges which, if true, would make the candidate ineligible to run for the office he/she is seeking.
- Challenges must be filed no later than the date and time specified by CPS, generally a week after the close of candidate nominations. Filed the challenge with the CPS Law Department (fax 773-553-1769 or 1702; you must keep fax receipt)

### Hearings

- Anyone can file a pre-election challenge.
- Hearings on pre-election challenges will be held during a time period specified by CPS prior to the election for nominees whose eligibility has been challenged.
- Candidates challenged must be notified no later than 24 hours after the challenge has been filed, and provided with a copy of the challenge form and any evidence attached, and the date, time, and place of the hearing. Challengers must also be notified of the hearing date, time, and place.
- The candidate may make arrangements for an alternate hearing date; the challenger will then be informed of the new date.
- The Board will assign hearing officers to all hearings. The Area Officer shall make a determination of candidate eligibility, taking into consideration the recommendation of the hearing officer.
- Decisions shall be issued within two day school days of the decision by telephone or fax and also by mail to the challenged candidate and challenger.

**Remedies:** Decisions may include the following remedies: placing the person's name on the ballot at a school where he/she is eligible, changing the person's category, or removing the person from the ballot.

## Post-Election Challenges to Election Results

A post-election challenge requires the signatures of at least five people eligible to vote at the school.

- Challenges to election results must be filed no later than 5 pm on a day specified by CPS after the LSC election. File with the CPS Law Department (fax 773-553-1769 or 1702; you must keep fax receipt).
- Challenge forms are available at the school office, the Area Offices, the CPS central office, and from PURE and other community groups.
- Challenges must include specific charges which, if true, would change the election results.
- Winning candidates who have been challenged shall be eligible to sit on the LSC as of July 1 unless and until they are ruled ineligible following the hearing procedure.

### Hearings

- Post-election challenge hearings will be held between dates specified by CPS.
- Candidates challenged must be notified no later than 24 hours after the challenge has been filed, and provided with a copy of the challenge form and any evidence attached, and the date, time, and place of the hearing. Challengers must also be notified of the hearing date, time, and place.

- The candidate may make arrangements for an alternate hearing date; the challenger will then be informed of the new date.
- The Board will assign hearing officers to all hearings. The Area Officer shall make a determination of candidate eligibility, taking into consideration the recommendation of the hearing officer.
- Decisions shall be issued within two day school days of the decision by telephone or fax and also by mail to the challenged candidate and challenger.

**Remedies:** Remedies may include declaring a member ineligible and allowing the newly-seated LSC to fill the vacancy, calling for a recount, or ordering a new election.

### **LSC Election Results**

- Election results will be posted in the school after the count is final on election night.
- Parent and community candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be declared elected members of the LSC.
- The sitting LSC must certify the election results at a meeting to be held no later than 8 pm on a date specified by CPS, generally about a week after the election.
- In cases of a tie, the LSC shall determine the winner by lottery.
- At this meeting the LSC should remind the public of post-election challenge procedures.
- LSC must file a Certification of Results with Area Office by a date specified by CPS.
- The Area Office shall resolve any disputes concerning election procedures or results.
- If the LSC does not hold a meeting or has no quorum to certify results by the date specified by CPS for certification of results, the Area Office shall break any ties and certify the results.
- The names of the four teachers and the two students receiving the highest number of votes will be forwarded to the Board which will appoint all teacher and student members, generally at their June meeting.

### **Special circumstances- less than a full LSC elected**

- If less than the minimum number of persons eligible, but at least a quorum, are elected, the LSC shall appoint eligible persons to fill vacancies in parent, community or student positions.
- Teacher vacancies are to be filled through a teacher non-binding poll and Board appointment, and candidates for teacher positions may not vote until the Board has acted on their appointment.
- If less than the number required for a quorum is elected, call the Office of LSC Relations (773/553-1400).

### **New LSC Organizational Meeting**

Each new LSC must hold its organizational meeting between July 1 and July 14, as described on p. 2-16.

# Sample Meeting Documents

## Sample Agenda for Regular LSC Meeting

Garden Elementary School Local School Council Regular Meeting  
School Library  
April XX, 200X at 7:00 pm

- Welcome and Call To Order
- Roll Call
- Approval of Agenda
- Approval of March XX, 200X Minutes
- Announcements/Introduction of Guests
- Public Comment
- Reports
  - Chair
  - Principal
  - Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC)
  - Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC)
  - NCLB Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)
  - Student Council
  - School Improvement Plan Committee
  - Budget Committee
  - Personnel Committee
  - Safety and Discipline Committee
  - Community Outreach Committee
- Old Business
  - Vote on Principal Evaluation (Personnel Committee recommendation)\*
  - Vote on School Improvement Plan and Budget
- New Business
- Announce Date of Next Meeting
- Adjourn

\*A portion of this discussion will be held in **closed session** under Exception 1 of the Open Meetings Act: “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.”

### Telecommunications

LSC members may participate in this meeting by speaker phone. Any speaker phone participation will meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, that is, the member will be audible to the public and will participate in the entire meeting.

*This agenda must be posted at least 48 hours before the meeting.  
The schedule of regular meetings must be posted all year.*

# Sample Notice and Agenda for Special LSC Meeting

A special meeting of the Garden Elementary School Local School Council has been called by (the Chair) (four LSC members - *names and signatures are not required*) for the purpose of considering modifications to the annual principal evaluation.

School Library  
May XX, 200X at 6:00 pm

## Agenda

- Welcome and Call To Order
- Roll Call
- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comment
- Finalize Principal Evaluation\*
- Adjourn

\*A portion of this meeting will be held in **closed session** under Exception 1 of the Open Meetings Act: “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.”

## Telecommunications

LSC members may participate in this meeting by speaker phone. Any speaker phone participation will meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, that is, the member will be audible to the public and will participate in the entire meeting.

*This notice and agenda must be posted at least 48 hours before the meeting.  
All LSC members must be given written notice of the special meeting ahead of time.*



# Sample Notice and Agenda for LSC Organizational Meeting

The annual organizational meeting of the Garden Elementary School Local School Council has been called by (four LSC members - *names and signatures are not required*) for the purpose of electing officers, setting the calendar of LSC meetings for the coming year, and establishing initial committee meetings for the year.

School Library  
July 9, 200X at 6:00 pm

## Agenda

- Welcome and Call To Order (*principal, last year's chair, vice-chair, secretary, etc. may open the meeting and run it until a temporary chair is selected*)
- Selection of Temporary Chair
- Roll Call (*temporary chair runs meeting until chair is elected*)
- Approval of Agenda
- Election of Chair\*
- Election of Secretary\* (*chair runs the meeting from here on*)
- Election of Other Officers\*
- Set up Annual Schedule of LSC Meetings
- Schedule Initial Meetings of Bylaws, Budget, Personnel and SIPAAA Committees
- Public Comment
- Adjourn

\*A portion of this meeting may be held in closed session under Exception 3 of the Open Meetings Act: "The selection of a person to fill a public office, as defined in this Act, including a vacancy in a public office, when the public body is given power to appoint under law or ordinance, or the discipline, performance or removal of the occupant of a public office, when the public body is given power to remove the occupant under law or ordinance."

## Telecommunications

LSC members may participate in this meeting by speaker phone. Any speaker phone participation will meet the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, that is, the member will be audible to the public and will participate in the entire meeting.

*This notice and agenda must be posted at least 48 hours before the meeting.  
All LSC members must be given written notice of the special meeting ahead of time.*

# Sample Agendas Month By Month

General suggestions for LSC agenda items, activities, and committee work; add other items important to your school including issues raised during public forum.

## Basic Agenda Items

The following items could be included on the agenda of *every regular* LSC meeting:

- Welcome
- Approve or amend the agenda
- Approve or amend the minutes
- Reports from
  - Chair (including announcements)
  - Principal (including internal accounts report)
  - SIPAAA Committee (including SIPAAA monitoring report)
  - Budget Committee (including budget monitoring reports)
  - Personnel Committee
  - Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC)
  - Bilingual Advisory Committee
  - NCLB Parent Advisory Committee
  - Other committees

Action items

Old business

New business

Public comment

Adjourn

## Special agenda items month-by-month

### July

Between July 1-14 hold LSC Organizational Meeting.

### Preparation

LSC notebooks containing key LSC information and documents (LSC Leadership Guide, SIPAAA, budget, bylaws, staff roster, LSC roster, etc.).

### Agenda items

- Select chair and secretary (required) and other officers (optional).
- Set regular schedule of meeting dates for the year (required).

*Also optional:*

- Distribute LSC notebooks.
- Review bylaws or set up bylaws committee.
- Arrange for first committee meetings (Budget, SIPAAA, Personnel, etc. ).
- Public comment.

## August/September

### Preparation

#### *Committee work*

- Bylaws committee prepares recommendations for revisions, if needed.
- NCLB Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) prepares recommendation for LSC table and other outreach at fall Open House and November report card pick-up; if a parent survey is going to be used, allow time for CPS Law Department review.
- Budget committee reviews Final Budget report, prepares any recommendations for adjustments to the budget including use of any rollover funds.

### Agenda items

- Receive **Final Budget Report**, consider budget adjustments.
- Request personnel or principal evaluation committee to begin annual principal evaluation process.
- Ask principal to report on start-up of new programs.
- Plan LSC training calendar.

## October

### Preparation

#### *Committee work*

- Personnel committee meets with principal to discuss principal evaluation goals and processes, begins to prepare principal evaluation criteria, surveys, etc.
- SIPAAA team assembles, begins to plan internal review process.

### Agenda items

Finalize plans for report card pick-up including any parent surveys, etc.

If principal's contract is up for renewal in the coming year, ask personnel committee to begin process for determining retention/renewal decision including cumulative (four-year) evaluation.

## November

### Preparation

The LSC may include as part of the regular November LSC meeting the first required biannual meeting to report to the public on progress with the SIPAAA. If you do, it's important to make a special effort to announce and publicize the meeting, such as asking the local newspaper to run a story or asking the local library and park district as well as local businesses, houses of worship, and others in the school community to help by distributing flyers.

#### *Committee work*

SIPAAA team reviews school report card, prepares monitoring reports for LSC and progress reports for first LSC biannual meeting

## **Agenda items**

- Receive report on start-up of PPLC, NCLB PAC and BAC.
- Ask principal to present state school report card.
- Receive public comment on school progress and gather public input for next SIPAAA.

## **December - March**

### **Preparation**

#### *Committee work*

- SIPAAA team prepares needs assessment and planning for next school year.
- SIPAAA team/PPLC work with principal to develop proposed SIPAAA for coming year
- Budget Committee reviews tentative budget allocations, develops budget proposal.
- Personnel Committee prepares principal evaluation recommendations. Four-year evaluation must be completed by January at the latest for LSC renewal/non-renewal decision by Feb. 1.
- Principal selection activities where applicable.

### **Agenda items**

Principal whose contract is up for renewal must be notified of LSC's intent to renew or not to renew by Feb. 1 for contracts that end June 30.

Review tentative budget allocations for next year.

Receive progress reports from SIPAAA team, PPLC, other committees in preparation for SIPAAA.

Plan for April report card pick-up, spring biannual meeting, LSC election in even years.

## **Key Spring Deadlines**

**April report card pick-up** - LSC election on even years.

**April 15** - 4-year principal contracts must be signed for contracts beginning July 1.

**May 1** - usual date by which SIP/budget must be approved and submitted.

**May 1** - written principal evaluation due to principal.

## **April**

### **Preparation**

The LSC may include as part of this regular LSC meeting the second required biannual meeting to report to the public and present the proposed SIPAAA and budget. Again, it's important to make a special effort to notify parents and the community that key decisions about the school will be discussed at this meeting.

#### *Committee work*

- Personnel committee prepares annual principal evaluation report.
- SIPAAA team reviews SIPAAA draft with input from PPLC, BAC, PAC, others.
- Budget committee reviews proposed budget with input from PPLC, BAC, PAC, others
- Where applicable, final principal selection preparations.

**Agenda items**

- Hold second well-publicized meeting to present proposed Budget and School Improvement Plan to school community.
- Finalize and approve SIPAAA including entire budget.
- Consider final principal evaluation.

**May/June**

PPLC may wish to survey teachers on success of programs and ideas for improvement next year.

*LSC Minutes do not need to be as detailed as this sample.  
We added some detail to show what might go on in an effective LSC meeting.*

### **Sample Minutes for Regular LSC Meeting**

Minutes of the Garden Elementary Local School Council  
Regular meeting, April XX, 200X  
7:00 pm

**Welcome and Call to Order:** The April XX, 200X regular meeting of the Garden Elementary Local School Council was called to order by the chairperson, Mrs. Annie Smith, at 7:00 p.m., in the school library.

**Roll Call:** Secretary Mrs. Green called the roll. A quorum was present.

*Members in attendance were:* Mrs. Annie Smith, Mr. John Smith, Ms. Pamela Jones, Mrs. Alice Green, Mrs. Maria Martinez, Mr. Angelo Gonzalez, Ms. Jane Stein, Ms. Nellie Price and Mr. Steve Johnson, Principal.

*Members not in attendance were:* Mr. Alex Jones and Ms. Sonia Angels.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Mr. Gonzalez made a **motion to approve the agenda** with the addition of an item to new business, the proposal for creating a Parent Patrol, which will be presented by the Safety and Discipline Committee. Ms. Stein seconded the motion. The vote was 9-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

**Approval of the Minutes:** Ms. Price made a **motion to approve the March XX, 200X minutes** as corrected - the vote on allocating \$500 in SGSA rollover funds to the Great Books program should read \$300 instead. Mr. Gonzalez seconded the motion. The vote was 9-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

**Announcements/Introduction of Guests:** Mrs. Smith welcomed all guests and introduced Ms. Erma Hobbes, the new director of the local park district.

Mrs. Smith announced the upcoming school events which have been mentioned in the parent newsletter and are posted on the school web site.

#### **Public Comment**

Mr. Ames spoke in favor of having a Parent Patrol, and said that he is eager to begin as a volunteer and hopes that the LSC will approve the plan.

Ms. Harvey had a question about the budget. Mrs. Smith said that she will have a chance to ask her question when the LSC comes to that item on the agenda.

## Reports

*Chair Report:* Mrs. Smith thanked the PPLC, the SIPAAA Committee and the Budget Committee for all their hard work preparing the SIPAAA and budget proposals. She reported that she attended an LSC Chair networking event sponsored by the local community organization and brought back some information to share about fundraising opportunities for the school.

*Principal's Report:* Mr. Johnson's written principal's report including the internal accounts report is attached.

Several LSC members asked for more information about the staff development activities for the past month. Mr. Johnson provided more information about the sessions and the connection to the school's SIPAAA goal for increasing the integration of the arts into all aspects of the curriculum.

*Professional Personnel Leadership Committee (PPLC) Report:* PPLC Co-chair Mrs. Martinez reported that the PPLC met on April XX and finished up their proposals for the SIPAAA. At their May meeting they will begin working on a teacher survey for the end of the year.

*Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) Report:* Mrs. Ortiz, the BAC Chair, reported that textbooks have been received and that testing for the bilingual students has been completed. The BAC reviewed the bilingual budget for the coming year and provided the Budget Committee with their recommendations.

*NCLB Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Report:* Mrs. Green, the PAC Chair, reported that 30 parents attended the workshop on Positive Discipline that was held on April XX. The PAC discussed the NCLB programs and budget for the coming year and provided the Budget and SIPAAA Committees with their recommendations. They are especially concerned that the LSC make sure there are adequate funds in the budget for materials and supplies for the parent room.

*Student Council Report:* No report.

*School Improvement Plan Committee Report:* Mr. Gonzalez, the SIPAAA Committee Chair, thanked all the committee members for their hard work and stated that the SIPAAA report consists of the proposal that will be considered under Old Business.

*Budget Committee Report:* Mrs. Price reported on behalf of the Budget Committee Chair, Mr. Jones, who was not able to attend the meeting due to a family emergency, that he, too, thanked all the committee members and everyone who had contributed to the budget proposal, and that the committee report was the submission of the budget proposal.

*Personnel Committee:* Mrs. Smith, the Personnel Committee Chair, stated that the Committee met twice during April to complete the annual principal evaluation and that their proposed evaluation report would be considered under Old Business. She thanked the committee members and especially Mr. Johnson, the principal, for his cooperation and input.

*Safety and Discipline Committee:* Mr. Smith, the Safety and Discipline Committee Chair, presented a proposal that the school start a Parent Patrol. Mrs. Smith stated that the proposal would be considered under New Business but could not be voted on at this meeting because it was not listed on the agenda..

*Community Outreach Committee:* No report.

## **Old Business**

### **Vote on Principal Evaluation**

In order to review the proposed principal evaluation, Mr. Smith made a motion **that the LSC go into closed session under Exception 1 of the Open Meetings Act:** “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.” The motion was seconded by Mrs. Smith. The vote was 8-yes, 0-no, 1-abstain. The motion passed.

The LSC went into closed session at 7:45 pm.

At 8:10 pm, Ms. Price made a motion that **the LSC go back into open session.** Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The vote was 9-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

Mrs. Smith made a motion that **the LSC approve the annual principal evaluation** for Mr. Johnson with a rating of “Meets Expectations.” Mr. Gonzalez seconded the motion. The vote was 7-yes, 1-no, 1-abstain. The motion passed.

### **Vote on the School Improvement Plan and Budget**

Mrs. Smith stated that she would like to set aside the next 45 minutes for questions and comments from the public and from LSC members on the proposed SIPAAA and budget. If more time was needed, she would consider extending the comment period.

#### *Discussion*

Ms. Harvey asked about reducing class size in the third grade.

Mr. Ames suggested that there should be a second security guard.

Ms. Jones stated that she is in favor of the budget and SIPAAA as presented, and that if we have extra funds in the fall, we could consider some of the other proposals.

Mrs. Martinez said that the PPLC is pleased that the budget includes the new art teacher. They are excited about using more arts in the curriculum and hope that the parents will become involved in the arts program.

Mrs. Green added that the PAC will invite the new art teacher to their first meeting in the fall to introduce the parents to the program and see where they can help.

Mr. Johnson said that the new reading program has been working well and he believes that the students will do even better next year after they have been exposed to the new curriculum for a full year.



Mr. Gonzalez called the question. Mrs. Smith asked if there were any further comments or questions. Hearing none, she asked for a motion **to approve the SIPAAA and budget as presented**. It was so moved by Ms. Stein. Ms. Price seconded the motion. The vote was 9-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

### **New Business**

Mr. Smith asked the LSC to consider the proposal to create a Parent Patrol. Mrs. Price made a motion to **table the proposal** due to the late hour and to give the Budget Committee and the PAC a chance to review it before the next meeting. Mr. Gonzalez seconded the motion. The vote was 7-yes, 2-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

There was no other new business.

Mrs. Smith announced that the next regular LSC meeting will be held on May XX, 200X at 7 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

(Secretary's signature)

These minutes were approved as presented (as corrected) on \_\_\_\_\_.

# Sample Minutes for Special LSC Meeting

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Garden Elementary School Local School Council  
May XX, 200X  
6:00 pm

The special meeting was called by four LSC members, Mr. Gonzalez, Mr. Jones, Mrs. Martinez, and Ms. Angels for the purpose of considering modifications to the annual principal evaluation.

**Call to Order:** The special meeting was called to order by the chairperson, Mrs. Annie Smith, at 6:05 p.m., in the school library.

**Roll Call:** Secretary Green called the roll. A quorum was present.

*Members in attendance were:* Mrs. Annie Smith, Mr. Alex Jones (who participated by speaker phone), Ms. Sonia Angels, Mr. John Smith, Ms. Pamela Jones, Mrs. Alice Green, Mrs. Maria Martinez, and Mr. Angelo Gonzalez.

*Members not in attendance were:* Ms. Jane Stein, Ms. Nellie Price and Principal Mr. Steve Johnson.

**Approval of Agenda:** Ms. Angels made a motion **to approve the agenda as presented**. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The vote was 8-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

**Public Comment:** Mrs. Smith opened Public Comment by stating that the LSC had met with Principal Johnson on May XX to discuss the evaluation. The LSC is meeting tonight to decide if they will modify the evaluation.

*Other comments:*

Mrs. Flournoy said that she came to this meeting to support the principal, and that she felt that he should receive a higher rating. He has been very helpful with her son who has special needs.

Mr. Archer said that, as a teacher, he felt that the rating should be higher because Mr. Johnson has supported the teachers in starting some new programs and that their previous principal never did that.

No other comments were made.

Mrs. Smith asked for a motion to go into closed session to discuss the principal evaluation. Mrs. Green moved that **the LSC go into closed session under Exception 1 of the Open Meetings Act:** “The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Jones. The vote was 8-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

The LSC went into closed session at 6:25 pm. The LSC returned at 7:05 pm. Mrs. Green made a motion that **the LSC go back into open session**. Mr. Smith seconded the motion. The vote was 8-yes, 0-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

Ms. Angels made a motion that **the LSC approve the annual principal evaluation** as modified with a rating of “Meets Expectations” and with specific goals for the coming year as attached to the evaluation. Mr. Gonzalez seconded the motion. The vote was 6-yes, 2-no, 0-abstain. The motion passed.

Mrs. Smith stated that the modified evaluation rating was the same but the actual numerical score was raised. She said that the modified evaluation also included goals for the coming year which the LSC and the principal developed jointly in their May XX meeting. The principal and the Personnel Committee will meet regularly throughout the year to discuss progress with those goals.

The final principal evaluation will be sent to the Area Office by June 1.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

(Secretary’s signature)

These minutes were approved as presented (as corrected) on \_\_\_\_\_.

# Sample Motion Form

## John Doe Elementary Local School Council

**Motion Form # 10-XX-0X-3**

**Date** October XX, 200X

**Motion Made By** Ms. Ogden

**Seconded By** Mr. Thomas

**Motion:** To allocate \$300 in SGSA rollover funds to purchase Great Books material for grades 1 to 3.

**Results:** Yes: 8      No: 2      Abstain: 0      Absent: 0      Total: 11

**Motion Carried?** Yes  No

**Record of Votes on Motion:** Regular Motion 8-2      Special Motion

**Note\*** In a Transfer of Funds vote, a **Supermajority** vote is needed  
7-Elem / 8 HS

The student member in a high school may **not** vote on personnel issues.  
The principal and student member may **not** be considered in a quorum **nor** vote on  
Principal evaluation, retention/selection.

		Council Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Not Eligible
P		Jody Lyons	X				
P		Flora Ogden	X				
P		VACANCY					
P	C	Ana Rodriguez	X				
P		Nelson Thomas	X				
P		Vicki Thomas	X				
C		Rita Mitchell		X			
C	S	Stella Young	X				
T		Delia Key	X				
T		Barnard Lewis		X			
A		Danny Chase	X				
S							

**SIGNED** Ana Rodriguez

**DATE** 10/XX/200X **#VACANCIES** 1

