

Baldwin School Council

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

Attendees: Kate Flaim, Michelle Morphew, Nina Farouk

Agenda: Review the new CPS School Council Handbook and school council election process.

The agenda of our October 2021 school council meeting was 'what is school council', and at that meeting we discussed how the district was planning to formalize school councils. Since that time, the district has put together an extensive School Council Handbook for all schools in our district to adhere to, as well as a formal election process for parent members of the council. The district handbook provides district-level guidance to be sure district schools follow the guidelines from the state as well as to ensure that school councils represent their school community.

This process is formalizing the way school councils are currently run, however, it does not mean it is a closed group of members. By law, school councils must follow open meeting laws. If votes are needed, the council members will vote.

School council membership should be representative of all families, having voices from every neighborhood and community as well being representative for all students. The district guidelines would like the council to have parity - balance - an equal number of staff to parents. The term of the elected parents would be a 2-year term. School council members would have to attend a school council training.

The district is asking a parent group in each school to oversee the election. Right now, our parent group, Friends of Baldwin, is a bit overwhelmed preparing for STEM Day. Heidi has templates of school council elections from her prior school's PTO. Using these will take some of the burden off the Friends of Baldwin.

The timeline specified that elections would be run before the end of the current school year.

The attendees of the meeting reviewed the "Checklist for School Council Membership" requirements of council membership and the election process and timeline. Some of the questions raised:

The group was concerned about the commitment of a two year term, however, if someone had to leave after the first year, we could have an election to replace that member.

We have a wonderful group of room parents, eager to volunteer in a classroom, however, that does not translate to School Council membership or Friends of Baldwin leadership. How do we take that room parent strength and energy and translate that into whole school participation at school council and Friends? How do we encourage equity in volunteering? Back in our October meeting, we talked about how fewer adults at a council meeting may be because of a high sense of trust in our educational staff and leadership. Parents have a finite amount of time to volunteer.

Another concern is having a spring election will eliminate 75 new JK/K families. In addition, if it is a two year term, will that dissuade rising 5th grade parents to volunteer to be a council member? If the district is willing to be flexible and allow a September election, it would allow for education and recruiting at upcoming concerts, events that have very high parent/caregiver participation. It may also allow our new JK/K families.

For parity, we also need to see how many teachers would be interested in serving on the school council in order to determine how many parents will be needed.

The district is very much looking forward to schools starting the year off with their council in place.

Update: The district has approved that elections can be held in September thanks to Ms. Heidi!

[School Council Handbook](#)