School-based decision making (SBDM) is occurring in almost all of the states in the nation at some level, and several places have mandated SBDM just as in Kentucky. In every state, however, there are some differences and these differences become more specific in places such as Kentucky where SBDM is required by law.

**KENTUCKY'S SBDM**
In Kentucky, school-based decision making is part of our education reform. SBDM was included in the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990. The law governing SBDM has been updated in several sessions of the Kentucky General Assembly.

**WHO MUST HAVE SBDM COUNCILS?**
All Kentucky public schools must have school-based decision making councils by July 1, 1996, except successful schools with state approval, districts with only one school and special schools (district operated vocational-technical, special education, preschool programs, alternative programs, or programs operated in institutions or outside of the district).

**WHO SERVES ON THE COUNCILS?**
Councils are composed of the principal, two parents and three teachers. The teachers elect their representatives and the parents elect their representatives (see page 6). Councils may be larger but must be proportionally larger, e.g.: six teachers, four parents and two administrators. A proportional variation can take place without approval from the Kentucky Board of Education. Other variations which are not proportional can be requested from the Kentucky Board of Education, but parent membership must not fall below one-third of the voting members.

**WHICH PARENTS CAN BE ON THE COUNCIL?**
All parents of students in the school are eligible to serve as a member of the school-based decision making council, except those specifically excluded by the law. The law defines parent as, “1. parent, stepparent or foster parent of a student; or 2. a person who has legal custody of a student pursuant to a court order and with whom the student resides.”

The newest law states that, a parent representative on the council shall not be an employee or the relative of an employee of the school in which the parent serves. The parent members of the council shall not be employees or relatives of employees of the district central office, nor shall they be a local board member or his spouse, (Relative is defined as “father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, aunt, uncle, son-in-law, daughter-in-law.”)

Parent members must have a child enrolled in the school during their term on the council. The parent member does not have to be a member of the PTA.

---

**Kentucky Education Reform**

**“CAPACITIES” TO BE ACQUIRED BY ALL KENTUCKY STUDENTS**
- Communication skills necessary to function in a complex and changing civilization.
- Knowledge to make economic, social and political choices.
- Understanding of governmental processes as they affect the community, the state and the nation.
- Sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his/her mental and physical wellness.
- Sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage.
- Sufficient preparation to choose and pursue his or her life’s work intelligently.
- Skills to enable him or her to compete favorably with students in other states.

**THE SIX GOALS FOR SCHOOLS OF THE COMMONWEALTH**

**Goal #1:** Application of basic communication and math skills.

**Goal #2:** Application of core concepts and principles from mathematics, the sciences, the arts, the humanities, social studies and practical living skills.

**Goal #3:** Becoming a self-sufficient individual.

**Goal #4:** Becoming a responsible member of a family, work group, or community.

**Goal #5:** Thinking and problem solving.

**Goal #6:** Connecting and integrating new experiences and knowledge.

**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ELECTION OF THE COUNCIL’S PARENT MEMBERS?**

The law states the election shall be conducted by the parent-teacher organization or, if none exists, the largest organization of parents formed for this purpose. That means the election for the parent members must be conducted by a parent organization such as the PTA. If there is none, one must be formed for this purpose. The law does not allow booster type parent groups, such as band boosters, athletic boosters or academic boosters, to conduct the election. The law does not allow the parent members to be appointed—not by the PTA, other parent-teacher organizations, the principal, or any other person or group.
School Councils

WHAT COUNCILS DO:
- Develop policies to enhance student achievement and meet education reform goals.
- When a vacancy occurs, select a principal from a list of candidates recommended by the superintendent.
- Decide how many people to employ in each job classification, i.e., decide how many teachers, how many aides, how many custodians, and so on.
- Provide consultation to the principal whenever there is a vacancy on staff.
- Select the following resources:
  1) Textbooks
  2) Instructional materials, i.e., materials that help students learn or help teachers teach, other than textbooks;
  3) Student support services, i.e., services that help students become ready and able to learn; and
  4) Professional development (65% of funding).
- Determine
  1) The local school budget;
  2) The organization of ungraded primary; and
  3) A comprehensive school safety plan.
- Set policy in the following areas:
  1) Enhancing the school environment;
  2) Curriculum, i.e., what to teach;
  3) Assigning staff time for both instructional and non-instructional programs;
  4) Assigning students to classes and programs;
  5) Developing the school schedule;
  6) The use of school space;
  7) Instructional practices, i.e., how to teach;
  8) Discipline and classroom management;
  9) Committees; and
  10) Extra curricular activities and programs.
- Develop processes for deciding:
  1) Whether school is in line with state standards;
  2) How the school will use technology; and
  3) How the school determines whether its programs work.

WHAT COUNCILS DO NOT DO:
- Run the school on a day to day basis.
- Break local, state or federal laws.
- Risk health and safety.
- Risk lawsuits.
- Break contracts.
- Spend money the school does not have.
- Make decisions outside their areas of responsibility.

[For example, evaluate or fire staff, set salaries, raise taxes, set bus routes, assign students to schools, decide when to build new buildings, pay utility bills, etc.]

Local School Boards' Areas of Responsibilities

- Matters relating to formation of councils.
- Policies to facilitate the implementation of SBDM.
- Long range district planning.
- Equity for all students.
- District budget.
- Facility issues.
- Salary issues.
- Enter into contracts.
- Property sales and acquisition.
- Assignment of students to schools.
- Formats for school improvement plans.
- Professional development plans.
- Parent and community support and involvement.
- General personnel policies.
- Student outcomes.
- Student progress reports. (report cards)
- Requirements for record keeping for councils.
- Policies for appeal of decisions of a council.