

DISTRICT-WIDE TEAMWORK

District leaders and school councils both play key roles in providing leadership and support that will enable all students to succeed. This handout shares four ways to strengthen communication between school councils and districts so that together they can focus on student achievement.



1. COUNCIL OF COUNCILS

SHELBY COUNTY:

Shelby County councils selected their representatives for the Council of Councils in July.

In August, December, February, and April each Council had on their agenda an item that said "Determine items for Council of Councils meeting" so they could submit items, if they wanted to do so. In October, February, April, and June each Council had on their agenda an item that said, "Report from the Council of Councils meeting."

The September meeting was on KCCT, led by someone in the Student Achievement Division.

The January meeting was on allocations, led by KDE staff, and all council members and Board members were invited.

The March meeting was on the school improvement plan, led by someone in Student Achievement Division.

The May meeting was a reflection time.

FAYETTE COUNTY:

Fayette County is one of a growing number of districts who have created a Council of Councils, or as it is sometimes called, a Super Council. The group shares information about council work among the councils in the district and with the central office. This open communication provides a chance to share resources and ideas.

Here is information about Fayette County's Super Council:

Purpose:

- Provide an opportunity for councils district-wide to share and discuss information (successes and concerns) on topics, and issues of interest.
- Provide an opportunity to discuss with Superintendent, staff, and others, areas of interest, and concerns.

- Afford an opportunity for the Superintendent and councils to have discussions about district-wide issues, focus, and initiatives that impact student achievement.

Preliminary Format:

- The Super Council meets at 6:00 pm (or other agreed upon time).
- Monthly (The group could elect to have meetings set up quarterly and semi-annually.)
- Pizza or sandwiches are served.
- Informal Agenda - Discussion topics are informal, but with ground rules.
- Super Council meetings will be level specific (Elementary, Middle, and High).

Membership: The Super Council will consist of one representative member from each SBDM council (councils should also have an alternate that can attend if original member can not), Superintendent, District SBDM Resource Specialist.

OTHER DISTRICTS:

Other districts with a Council of Councils offered this information:

Henderson County: What works for us is a meeting that is work-oriented and not lecture-oriented. You need a well-planned agenda, so the time is used effectively.

Floyd County: We always target February because of budgets and staffing issues and that is the topic of that meeting.

Daviess County: We use this as an opportunity to update the council members on new happenings in the district. It's a wonderful group of folks who get the opportunity to learn from each other.



2. CENTRAL OFFICE LIAISONS

Having a central office liaison for each council in the district provides additional support for council work and helps the council with their focus on student achievement.

MARION COUNTY

Every certified person in the Marion County central office is a liaison for a school council. The high school meets more often so they have two or three central office certified employees assigned. The liaisons attend every council meeting in an advisory capacity. They help with legal issues and district policy, assist with timeline issues, including when things are due to the board for approval. The liaison serves as a resource for that council in any area but can be especially helpful in answering questions about board policy and state and federal laws. They are available to stay and talk with principals after the meeting (if requested) about how things are going or what the principal as the chair could have done differently. The liaison is at the meeting to help the council and is the person the council can call later about any council issue. The superintendent usually assigns himself to schools with new principals. There is no formal report back to central office; this is strictly about meeting council needs



3. COUNCIL AND SCHOOL BOARD COLLABORATION

This model for council and school board collaboration is a combination of ideas from Kenton County, Marion County, and Oldham County.

“WHAT WE HAVE HEREIS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE!”

This line from the old Paul Newman movie, *Cool Hand Luke*, describes the problem that exists in many school districts in our Commonwealth today. School Councils and Boards of Education **must communicate if Proficiency by 2014 is to become a reality.**

Some districts utilize four significant processes for School Council/BOE communication:

- (1) **Fall Retreat** - analyze CATS Results and other data (District Needs Assessment) and begin discussion of possible 2-year targets to close “substantive achievement gaps”
- (2) **BOE meetings at each school** throughout the school year focused on student learning
- (3) **BOE meetings in December-January** focused on progress with successful implementation of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan and reaching agreement on 2-year Targets for closing “substantive achievement gaps” as required by SB 168
- (4) **BOE meeting prior to April 1st** to hear a report from each school council on final revisions in the improvement plan

(These four processes are expanded on below.)

(1) FALL RETREAT

The participants serve as the District Planning Committee. The group includes all members of each School Council, all members of the BOE, and the Central Office certified staff.

School Councils and Committees have 4-6 weeks to conduct a school needs assessment beginning September 15th. Each School Council reports their needs assessment findings to the District Planning Committee during the Retreat. This report includes identified possible 2-year targets for closing “substantive achievement gaps” and needed revisions in the school improvement plans to reach those targets.

After each School Council reports to the District Planning Committee, the committee begins to consider revisions in the district improvement plan necessary to support reaching the identified targets.

(2) BOE MEETINGS AT EACH SCHOOL

The BOE meets twice each month in regular session from September-March. One meeting is focused entirely on communication between the BOE and the School Council, Committees, and Staff

concerning student learning. This is an opportunity for each school to share/showcase for the BOE those strategies/activities that are making a positive difference for students as assessed by cognitive and non-cognitive measures.

This meeting provides much positive reinforcement for the school. The BOE will ask many questions based on what they have heard, read and seen and there is much interaction with the principal, faculty, staff, parents, and students.

(3) BOE MEETINGS IN DECEMBER/JANUARY

The essential question for this meeting is: **Will the activity, project, or strategy have an impact on student learning over a period of time and how will we measure the resulting improved student achievement?**

Each School Council reports on the successful implementation of their school improvement plan and presents proposed 2-year Targets for closing “substantive achievement gaps” for BOE and Superintendent agreement. SB168 requires this be done prior to February 1ST.

School Councils will develop revisions in their school improvement plan to support reaching the agreed upon 2-year Targets, including a timetable for completely eliminating the achievement gaps in the future. The BOE must consider and approve this plan by April 1st.

To prepare board members for this meeting, the Central Office Staff compiles a packet of information about each school, including recent data, copies of the improvement plan, Implementation & Impact Reports, and any other information of interest or concern. The School Council prepares an Executive Summary. The Executive Summary is a response to an “open response” question prepared by the Instructional Supervisors. The BOE receives the packet of information for each school one week before the meeting to allow ample time for board members to study and formulate questions.

Each School Council presents their Executive Summary with questions from the BOE immediately after the presentation. Board members complete a SBDM Feedback Form for each school to be discussed at the next regularly scheduled School Council meeting. Also, the BOE will make budget and policy decisions based on the information gathered from the Fall Retreat, BOE meetings at each school, and the School Council presentations made to the BOE in December/January.

(4) BOE MEETING PRIOR TO APRIL 1st – IMPROVEMENT PLAN FINAL REVISIONS

Prior to April 1st, the BOE will hear a report from each School Council on the final revisions to their school improvement plan necessary to meet the 2-year Targets for closing the “substantive achievement gaps,” including a timetable for completely eliminating the gaps in the future.



4. PARTNERSHIP FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Kentucky Association of School Councils and the Kentucky School Boards Association came together to ponder ways in which they could better help Kentucky schools and students reach their federal and state-mandated goals of proficiency by 2014.

They asked the question, *"What would happen if school boards and school councils jointly reviewed student achievement data, then combined their resources to improve weaknesses in performance?"*

The result of this collaboration was **The Partnership for Student Achievement**.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The Partnership for Student Achievement is a 2 1/2 hour session, facilitated by a KASC or KSBA trainer and using the following process:

- Participating school councils, board teams, and central office staff begin the session in one large group.
- The trainer leads the group through a general review of district data and trends.
- Following the review, the large group divides into six smaller groups with each group (using specially prepared graphs and charts) reviewing CATS data for a particular subject - math, science, writing, reading, social studies, and either practical living/vocational or arts and humanities - across grade levels and student groups.
- Finally, the groups come together to report findings and determine "next steps" for the councils, the school boards, and the central office.

By jointly reviewing information about student assessment scores, boards and councils have a foundation for addressing the academic needs of all students. These discussions will lead to improved communication between school boards and school councils and a shared plan of action to reach proficiency by 2014.

- To schedule the Partnership for Student Achievement training in your district, contact: Kerri Schelling at the Kentucky School Boards Association (800) 372-2962 ext. 276 or by email at: kerri.schelling@ksba.org

This session is approved for EILA and KSBA team development credit.