Advisory School Councils

Each public school within the district shall establish a school council, as defined in Section 22-5-16 NMSA 1978, to assist the principal in an advisory capacity with school-based decision-making and to provide parents with the opportunity for greater involvement in their children’s education.

1. Membership: Each school council shall be composed of seven members: two school employees, two parents, and two community members. If such person is available, at least one community member shall represent the business community. The principal shall be an active member on the council and may serve as the chair. In the event insufficient interest is shown in a seven-member council, as demonstrated by the failure of sufficient numbers of candidates to declare for positions, the principal may reduce the membership to retain, as closely as possible, an equitable ratio of categories of members.

2. Election procedures:
   a. Term: Each school council shall be elected annually no later than the fortieth day after the beginning of the school year. Council members shall serve until the expiration of the council’s term on August 1 following the completion of that school year.
   b. Qualifications for membership:
      1. School employee members must be currently employed by the Rio Rancho Public Schools at the school on whose council they serve.
      2. Parent members must have a child currently enrolled at the school on whose council they serve.
      3. Community members must reside in Rio Rancho or must have a child enrolled in a Rio Rancho public school.
   c. Declaration of candidacy: Annually, no later than May 15 of each school year, the site principal shall determine the dates for filing a declaration of candidacy and for the election of council members for the next school year. The district shall post the dates for each school site on its Web site and at each school, shall provide notice of such dates at least twice to a newspaper of general circulation in the district, and shall provide notice to parents in a form reasonably calculated to advise them of the dates for establishing declarations of candidacy and for submitting ballots. A declaration of candidacy for membership on a school council may be obtained from the administrative offices at the school site at which the candidate desires to be a council member, from the district office, or through the district Web site beginning no later than May 15 of the prior school year. Forms shall be available until ten days before the first day ballots may be cast. The completed declaration of candidacy shall be returned to the school site no later than two weeks ten days before the first day ballots may be cast. At the time they return their declaration of candidacy, candidates shall show a driver’s license or picture ID, and shall demonstrate they meet the employment, student enrollment, and/or residency requirements for the position sought.
Conduct of election: The election shall be non-partisan. The election shall be conducted by paper ballot with the names of the candidates clearly printed on paper of a uniform color and size. Voting shall be conducted by circling the name of the candidate(s) the voter approves as a member of the council. Voters may select up to two candidates in each council member category. Selection of more than two candidates in a category shall disqualify the ballot.

Each school site shall maintain a locked ballot box at the school’s administrative office or other site as the school may designate where ballots may be deposited.

Each school site shall develop a list of qualified electors and ensure that the list is maintained so that electors cannot vote more than once. Qualified electors must be 18 years of age or older and must be a school employee, parent, or community member as defined in this policy.

Voters will have the opportunity to cast ballots for a minimum of five business days (or school days, if school is in session at the time of the election). Voters may deposit ballots in the ballot box at each school site during the normal business hours of the school on the dates established for the election. Schools may also provide the opportunity for voters to cast ballots during school events or at other convenient times within the election period.

Notice and administration of election: The district shall publish the list of candidates for each school council on the District’s Web site and that school’s Web site beginning at least ten days prior to the beginning date for receipt of ballots, and shall post a notice of the candidates at each school. Notices may be published in English and Spanish. Each school site and/or the district will also provide notification to a newspaper of general circulation in the district of the dates, list of candidates, and location of each election, and may also provide additional public information concerning each election.

Canvass: Voting at each school site shall be canvassed by a team consisting of a school-level administrator or staff member from the school site and a district-level administrator or staff member designated by the Superintendent. The canvass shall be completed by 5 PM on the second business day after the last day for receipt of ballots. The two candidates receiving the most votes in each category shall be the elected members for that category. In the event of a tie in any category, that tie shall be broken by coin-toss of the candidates that are tied.

Publication of election results: The principal shall post the names of the elected members to the council at the principal’s office of each school site by 5 PM on the third business day following the election. The district shall publish the names of the elected members on the district’s and school’s Web sites. Each school site shall publish the names of the elected council members in its school newsletter as soon as possible after the election. The district may provide the names of the elected members of school councils to a newspaper of general circulation.

Vacancies: In the event of a vacancy on an advisory council due to death, resignation, or other cause, the Superintendent shall appoint another qualified individual in the category in which the vacancy exists. Failure of a member to attend three consecutive school council meetings may result in the member’s position being declared vacant. A member appointed to fill a vacancy shall serve until the end of that school year.
7. **Meetings**: Meetings shall be determined by each school council or as called by the principal. Advisory school councils should meet a minimum of four times per year. Meetings of advisory councils are not policy-making meetings of the Board and are not required to be called and conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, NMSA 1987 ** 10-15-1 et. seq.

8. **Role of council**: Each school council shall function as an advisory council to the principal in accordance with Section 22-5-16 NMSA 1978 and perform such other duties and responsibilities as the principal may from time to time designate. The advisory school council shall:

   a. Work with the school principal and give advice, consistent with state and school district rules and policies, on policies relating to instructional issues and curricula and on the public school’s proposed and actual budgets;

   b. Develop creative ways to involve parents in the schools

   c. Where appropriate, coordinate with any existing work force development boards or vocational education advisory councils to connect students and school academic programs to business resources and opportunities; and

   d. Serve as the champion for students in building community support for schools and encouraging greater community participation in the public schools.

9. **Status**: Members of advisory councils are not entitled to any benefits or other reimbursement for services rendered as council members.

Reference: Section 22-5-16 NMSA 1978

Rio Rancho Public Schools
Adopted: July 26, 2004
Revised: June 13, 2005