

# Policies and Common Practices for All EL Building Parent Councils

## District Parent Council

Last Amended October 2012

*These policies were designed by the District Parent Council (DPC) to provide continuity and consistency between the various building councils. They should be considered as guidelines only, and be reviewed every year by each incoming building parent council. Any amendments or additions would be discussed by DPC and submitted to the Board of Ed for consent approval.*

### I. Meeting Business Conduct

1. Councils should operate so that parents of the school do not perceive that the council board, as a unified body, has an alignment with one legislative or ballot initiative over another. Therefore ELPS parent councils should not take a stand on legislative issues or efforts. Councils may provide parents procedural or contact information needed to effectively advocate, but not encourage advocating for a particular stance.
  - **Common Practice:** If an opinion group for a legislative or ballot issue is placed on the council agenda, the council leader should a) inform council members of the agenda item prior to the meeting and b) ensure that the format allows for other opinions to be shared. The sharing of other opinions need not be a separate presentation but could instead be in the form of allowing comments from the floor following a presentation. Prior to the opinion group's presentation, the council leader should clarify that "we, as a council Board, are not taking a position on this issue".
  - **Common Practice:** Board members may share their personal views and positions outside of meetings provided that they do not use their council leadership position to validate their stance.
2. Specific issues regarding inappropriate behavior of a parent should not be discussed by name at any council meeting. Specific individuals may be discussed confidentially at a Council Board-only meeting if resolution of the issue would protect the organization from financial loss or protect and safeguard other persons.
3. All councils shall abide by the following conflict of interest bylaw or policy:  
"Any possible conflict of interest with respect to any issue on the part of any Council board member shall be disclosed to the other council members prior to any discussion or action by the Council, or a committee of the Council. Disclosure may be made verbally to all Council members or by way of an annual report of affiliation."

A Council board member with any possible conflict of interest should not exercise personal influence in the action surrounding the matter, however the Council board member may report fully all pertinent knowledge about the matter and answer freely why a proposed decision or transaction would, or would not, be in the best interest of the Council.”

4. The building principal has the authority to veto any activity or event planned by that building’s council occurring on school property.

## **II. Maintain Valid Non-Profit Status**

1. All councils that are classified as a 501 (c) 3 and actively receive donation funds shall operate such that their non-profit status remains valid and their operations are accountable in the event of audit. This includes maintenance of meeting minutes, bank accounting records, annual budget, year-to-date statements, submission of the annual organizational filing report by October 1 of each year, and filing of the appropriate tax form after each year end.
  - **Common Practice:** Each council treasurer should maintain the last 7 years of financial records and tax filings. This file should also include a copy of the council’s original articles of incorporation.
  - **Common Practice:** Physical copies of minutes should be stored in a commonly accessible location. The Secretary should ensure that this file is kept current. Electronic web archives are acceptable for meeting minutes beyond 3 years.
  - **Common Practice:** After the council’s budget is approved, any expenditure overage or line item addition to the original budget must be **approved and** accounted for in the minutes.

## **III. Council Board Leadership**

1. Council leadership should strive to be inclusive of all races, genders and other demographic differences. Board and committee leadership positions should be clearly communicated to the entire parent body of the school.
2. All council board positions should be opened for election each year unless the bylaws state that it is a multiple-year position. Persons are able to be re-elected for a position, however that slated position must remain open during the nominating period so that all candidates for that post can be considered.

## **IV. Finance**

1. All council funding towards furnishings, equipment or fixtures for the school building or grounds must be approved by and processed through building administration. All

technology-related expenditures must also be approved by the district's Technology department. Items purchased for the school by the parent council are considered gifts to the school, thereby becoming school property.

2. Parent council gifts or grants to the school for individual purchases over \$1000 shall be submitted by the building principal to the BOE for approval prior to purchase of item (s).
  - **Common Practice:** Approval would be through the BOE consent agenda. Consent agenda would read: "A recommendation to accept the gift from [ building ] Parent Council for the purchase of [ item ] for [ \$ ]."
3. All council fundraising programs or fundraising events must be approved by the building principal.
  - **Common Practice:** Fundraisers should not include a reward system for individual student 'top sellers.'
4. When parent councils reimburse teachers for classroom spending, they should strive to pay them through a school account. However, if a teacher needs to be reimbursed directly, there must be a receipt provided to parent council to support the purchase. These receipts should be saved with the council's financial records.
  - **Common practice:** These reimbursements are represented clearly in the budget and minutes as "classroom spending", "spending reimbursement" or "classroom spending allowance" so that the purpose of the payment is clear. Terms such as "stipends" or "gifts" for this item should be avoided.

## V. Volunteer Support

1. Parent councils will support the school district in the requirement for criminal background checks on all parent volunteers. Councils will assist the school district in informing their council parent volunteers about the necessary procedures required prior to participating in school events.
  - **Common Practice:** Council Volunteer Coordinators or Committee Chairs should provide the district volunteer letter and Michigan State "ICHAT" form when assigning volunteers to their committee. This letter and form are available on the school website under "Volunteer Information" on the Parents & Families link.

## VI. Limitations on Political Campaigning in Non-profit Associations

1. Campaign literature is not to be distributed by council/association members during their meetings.

2. Campaign literature may be placed on a table or by the door for attendees to take voluntarily. At the end of the meeting all literature should be removed by the candidate or disposed of by the council/association.
3. All candidates should be provided equal opportunity at council meetings. If a candidate attended a council meeting uninvited and the council recognized the candidate and was given an opportunity to address the attendees, the council should then contact the other candidates and provide the same opportunity.
  - **Common Practice:** Communications with candidates or ballot proponents will be in writing and will be copied or forwarded to the other Board members of that building council. This procedure ensures that preferential treatment is not afforded to one candidate or proponent over another.
  - **Common Practice:** If candidates or ballot proponents are welcomed to speak at a meeting, they should be present at the same meeting so that those attending can hear all candidates or viewpoints in one sitting.

**Note:** Any changes to Policy VI must be approved by ELPS Administrator Rich Pugh