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W elcome to

PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School School

Advisory Council, SAC

As a member, you can help the School Advisory Council discover ways to improve the education of students in our school. You can also represent the views of others in the community and encourage their participation in the school. By valuing and respecting everyone's views, you can help the Council create a partnership among the school, the students' families, and the community. Such a partnership can help all students become well-educated, well-adjusted, and productive citizens. When the entire school community works together to support learning, children tend to succeed, not just in school but throughout their lives. Your participation in this process is crucial. Use this handbook as a guide to become an effective member of PVPV/Rawlings School Advisory Council.

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## **Philosophy**

The PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School Advisory Council recognizes that the education of students is a shared responsibility involving the school, students and their families, and members of this community. Parents and guardians have the right, as well as the responsibility, to participate in the education of their children, and can contribute to their children's development in a wide variety of ways. Other members of the community also offer a wealth of experience and expertise that may be of benefit to students. Members of all of these groups should, therefore, have the opportunity to advise in educational matters. PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School is committed to encouraging partnerships that will enhance the education of its students.

Florida Statutes 229.58 recommend that all schools establish School Advisory Councils to increase communication between schools and their communities and to enable parents and students to assume "a more responsible and active role" in education programs.

The St. Johns County School District (policy #2.04 see appendix) has authorized the establishment of a school improvement team in District schools to serve in an advisory capacity to the principal and to assist in the development of the educational program and in the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan.

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## PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School Advisory Council Operational Guidelines

### **The Benefits of Participation**

Our school Council provides a way for the community and the school to communicate and an opportunity for parents, students, and representatives of the community to take a responsible and active role in local educational issues and concerns.

Studies show that when parents are involved in their children's education, the children's attitude towards school improves and their level of achievement increases. Studies also show that when parents are involved, students' school performance increases, from arriving in class on time and behaving well to staying in school until graduation. At the same time, parents' involvement in schools usually increases the success of school programs and the effectiveness of the schools themselves.

It is not only the students and schools that benefit from parental and community involvement. The community also benefits. A partnership of school and community representatives increases mutual understanding and interaction between the school and community in general. It is, therefore, important for our school Council and for you, as a member of the Council, to encourage parents, friends, neighbors, and other community members to participate in our Council and take an active role in education in our community.

### **The Role and Functions of Our School Council**

Our school Council is an advisory body of volunteers who work together to provide ideas and opinions to help the principals and sometimes the school board make the school a better place for learning. Our Council should represent the diversity of the school community, which includes the parents and guardians of the children enrolled in the school and other people who live or work in the school's attendance area. It should give our community opportunities to discuss educational issues and respond to local educational needs by providing information for parents and community members, getting feedback from them, and presenting their views to the school and school board. It should help our school identify and respond to the educational needs of our community.

In its role as a link between the school and the community, our school advisory Council has two very important functions. „The first is to establish and maintain good communication among the school, parents and community and second is to encourage parents and community members to participate in education.

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## Council Membership

PVPV/Rawlings Advisory Council will reflect the diversity of our school community. Parents and guardians will form the majority of members on our Council. All Council members are full and equal partners. They bring before the Council the issues and concerns of the groups they represent, and provide links to those groups.

### Composition of School Councils

1. The PVPV/Rawlings School Advisory Council must include, but not be limited to the following persons as members:
  - parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school
  - community representative(s)
  - the school principals
  - teaching staff member(s)
  - non-teaching staff member(s)
2. Non-district employees shall form the simple majority of the Council (i.e.: 50% +1). A maximum of two community representatives may be appointed by the SAC. Community appointees must be community members who are representatives from local business and/or industry, social service agencies, community or non-profit organizations.
3. The size of the school Council, unless vacancies exist, shall not be less than nine. The school Council will determine a maximum size for the Council that best meets the needs of its school community, approximately 23, but this can be expanded to accommodate mandated diverse community representation. If a position is vacant, the Council shall function and continue to seek the required members to restore majority and balanced community representation.
4. It is expected that the membership of the Council reflects the diversity of the school community it serves with respect to ethnic,

racial and economic balance. The Council shall consider the issue of balance in the selection of the community representative(s).

5. Membership in the school Council shall be determined in the following ways:
  - Parents/guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students at the school. Parents/guardians may be nominated and acclaimed if there are equal numbers of positions and candidates.
  - The community representative(s) shall be appointed by the Council.
  - The school principals shall be a designated member.
  - Teacher representative(s) shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
  - Non-teaching (support) staff member(s) shall be elected by members of the non-teaching (support) staff.
6. The term of membership on the Council is for two years. Members may serve for longer to allow for Council continuity. There should be over-lapping of terms.

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## Roles and Responsibilities

### Role of the School Council

The PVPV/Rawlings School Advisory Council is an advisory body created to enhance students' learning through the cooperative efforts of parents, staff members, and others in the community. This Council will provide advice to the school principals and where appropriate to the school board. The SAC decides how the monies from the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund for School improvement will be allocated. This decision will be based on the data received through reports and needs assessments, and the best interests of all students in the school. The school advisory Council is accountable to the school community it represents.

The School Advisory Council represents a very real opportunity for establishing community relationships and for creating a broadened consensus around the purpose of public education and around student learning as the key focus of schools.

Building relationships and consensus requires support from all partners and a commitment to consultation, collaboration and co-operation. Parents, community members, school representatives and school district administrators and trustees must work together for student success.

### Role and Responsibilities of All Members of the School Advisory Council shall:

- maintain a school-wide perspective on issues
- participate in Council meetings
- participate in information and training programs
- act as a link between the school Council and the community
- encourage the participation of parents and community members
- attend Council meeting on a regular basis
- establish and review annually the Council's goals, priorities and procedures
- hold a minimum of eight meetings per year (all meetings shall be public)
- communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views

and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the Council to the school community

- assist in the preparation of the report to the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability as required by Florida Statutes

### Officers

Annually, the School Advisory Council elects the following officers Chairperson, vice-chairperson, and recording secretary.

### Role and Responsibilities of the Chairperson

- organizes and conducts School Advisory Council meetings
- make his/her telephone number available to the school office staff, school, community and school/community liaison officer
- establish and communicate, in consultation with the principal, a meeting schedule for the year
- call school Council meetings
- prepare the agenda for meetings in consultation with the principals and other Council members
- circulate the agenda to Council members at least seven days in advance of the meeting
- chair the meetings and be responsible for the time management of the agenda
- ensure that the minutes of the meetings are recorded and distributed according to the Council procedures
- participate in information and training programs
- communicate with the principals on a regular basis
- strive for diversity in sub-and ad-hoc committees
- facilitate collaborative decision-making
- ensure that there is regular communication with the school community
- presentation of the school improvement to the school board with the principals

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## Role and Responsibilities of the Vice-Chairperson

- chair Council meetings in the absence of the chairperson and assist the chair as required

## Role and responsibilities of the Recording Secretary

- maintain complete records of all meetings in a timely manner; ensure minutes are distributed to all Council members and the District Office of Accountability

## Role and Responsibilities of the Principals

- facilitate the establishment of the school Council and assist in its operation.
- attend all school Council meetings. The vice- principal may serve as a designate if the principal is not able to attend
- ensure that copies of the minutes of school Council meetings are kept at the school
- support and promote the Council's activities
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies and collective agreements
- obtain and provide information required by the Council to enable it to make informed decisions
- maintain regular communication with the chair of the school Council
- ensure that information and correspondence and other material intended for the school Council is forwarded to the school Council chair in a timely fashion
- assist the school Council in communication with the school community, seek input from the school Council in areas for which it has assigned advisory responsibility
- encourage the participation of parents, students, as appropriate and other people within the school community
- ensure that all printed materials from the school Council distributed through the school are consistent with the District School Board policy
- support an effective liaison among the school, the various organizations within it and any other parent group that exists in the school and the school Council

- presentation of the school improvement plan to the school board with the SAC chair

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## Elections

Membership in the school Advisory Council shall be determined in the following ways

- Parents/guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school. Parents/guardians may be nominated and acclaimed if there are equal numbers of positions and candidates.
- The community representative(s) shall be appointed by the Council
- The school principal shall be a designated member
- Teacher representative(s) shall be elected by members of the teaching staff
- Non-teaching (support) staff members of the non-teaching (support) staff

### Framework for School Council Elections

#### 1. *School Council Election Confirmation*

The current school Council will establish a new Council for the following academic year. The Council must ensure that a new Council is in place by June with provisions that two positions will remain vacant so membership can include those who are new to the school/community in August. These two reserved positions are to be filled by September of each year. This will maintain a term overlap on future school Councils which will facilitate continuity, allow for a learning period and maintain a group of experienced members.

#### 2. *Considerations for School Advisory Council Membership Process*

Appeals related to the school Council election process or results shall be resolved by the past school Council. If the situation is not resolved, the school principals and the Chair of the outgoing Council shall make a decision.

#### 3. *Considerations for of Parent Representatives*

- a. Parents/guardians of a student enrolled at the school are eligible to volunteer to serve on the Council. Self-nomination will suffice.
- b. No additional qualifiers or quotas may be used to restrict eligibility to volunteer as a parent member (For example, child's program, grade, location of home, etc.)
- c. Parents/guardians wishing to serve on the Council will be invited to submit a summary of their reasons for wanting to serve. This summary will be shared with the school community through the school newsletter at least one week before the Council considers approval of new members.
- d. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, the candidates shall be acclaimed and no election shall be held.
- e. If anyone in the general school membership objects to a proposed member, they may object to the current Council for consideration
- f. Invitation for new members will be advertised in the same manner as meetings.

#### 4. *Appointment of Community Representations*

- a. These representatives shall be elected initially through a nomination and selection process facilitated by the school principals.
- b. The school principals shall seek candidates who are interested in making a commitment to participate on the school advisory Council representing the community.
- c. Letters, newsletters, or other media release shall be used by the school principals to seek candidates.
- d. The school principals shall prepare a list of individuals seeking nomination to the SAC and shall present the list to the Council for selection.



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## 5. *Election of Staff Representative(s)*

- a. The principals, in consultation with the Council, will make the necessary arrangements for staff representatives to be elected.
- b. Anyone assigned to the staff of the school (full or part-time) may be eligible to serve.

All appointments to the school Council are by majority vote of the members at the meeting then serving on the school Council. Appointments shall be made at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of the meeting. The principals shall submit the list of purposed SAC members to the Superintendent for review and the School Board by September 29 for approval at the October Board meeting.

## Vacancies in Membership

1. Vacancies occur
  - a. when positions on the school Council have not been filled after selections in the fall;
  - b. when a member resigns; or
  - c. when a member has missed three consecutive meetings without prior notice to the chair
2. If there is a vacancy, the Council may appoint a representative for that position until the next academic year.
3. All appointments to fill vacancies on the school Council are by majority vote of the members at the meeting then serving on the school Council. Appointments shall be made at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of the meeting.

## Election of Chair and Other Officers

1. The Chair of the school Council shall be elected by members of the school Council. This election shall occur at the end of the school year (May).
2. A Vice-Chair and Secretary shall be elected, from the school Council members, at the same time as the Chair.
3. Should the position of Chair or any officer become vacant during the school year, the Council shall fill the vacancy at its next meeting.

## Appointing Community Representatives

The school advisory Council must define its community and then identify and appoint community representatives. This task will involve the following four stages:

1. understanding the community
2. identifying potential community representatives
3. outlining the advantages of being on the school Council
4. completing the selection process

### 1. *Understanding the Community*

A good understanding of the school community will allow you and the other Council members to identify individuals in the community who will best meet the educational needs of the students.

### 2. *Identifying potential community representatives*

The purpose of appointing community representatives to the school Council is to obtain support and help from the wider community. People from varied backgrounds who can tap into a vast network of resources will be able to support the school best. Our Council's choice of representatives to be appointed should reflect the school's needs and the availability of needed resources in the community. The Council may wish to consider representatives from the following examples of groups:

- Employer groups or associations, such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- The parks and recreation department
- Cultural agencies and arts groups
- Service clubs
- Business and industry groups
- Labor groups
- Social agencies
- Health-care organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Senior citizens groups
- Religious or faith groups

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Questions like the following can help you identify possible community representatives from the list of potential groups above:

Q: Who in the community can best support our efforts?

Q: Who can help make our Council truly representative?

Q: Who in our community can help our school? Q: Who has good links to diverse groups within our school community?

After examining the list of potential groups that could be represented on the Council, the Council members will draw up a specific list of potential community representative names

### 3. *Outlining the advantages of being on the school Council.*

Since the individuals invited to serve on our school Council will be asked to commit time to the Council's activities, they will want to know what they will gain from the experience.

Council members need to be prepared to tell to them about the advantages of being on the school Council. Think of responses for the following questions:

Q: What are the advantages of being on the school Council?

Q: What is the role of community representatives?

### 4. *Completing the selection process*

Before selecting potential representatives, the Council will determine the number of community representatives required. The process described in the "framework for School Elections" for the appointment of community representative will be followed.

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## Procedure at Council Meetings

### Council Meetings

1. Meetings will usually be held once a month during the school year.
  2. Meetings shall be open to all parents/guardians, students and teachers of PVPV/Rawlings as well as to members of the school community who wish to attend. All SAC activities including subcommittee meetings are subject to the Government in the Sunshine Law, section 286.001, Florida Statutes.
  3. The date, time and place of meetings will be decided by a quorum at the first meeting of the Council year and the calendar of meetings submitted to the district Office of Accountability.
  4. The agenda for each meeting shall be distributed to members of the Council and advertised to the school community at least seven (7) days prior to each meeting. The SAC shall provide public notice (e.g. school marquees, newsletter, local newspaper) of the meeting time and place.
  5. Minutes of all meetings will be distributed to members of the Council before the next meeting. A copy of approved minutes will be sent to the District Office of Accountability through interoffice mail or fax.
  6. While voting is the responsibility of the volunteer and appointed members, all members of the school community at large may voice their own ideas and opinions at any meeting. For issues of major concern, the chair should be approached and asked for these concerns to be added to the agenda, preferably prior to the set meeting date. The time allocated for these issues will be at the discretion of the chair.
  7. Members must respect the personal and professional rights of other members.
  8. Meetings will end at 4:00 unless the Council agrees to extend the time.
  9. Meeting minutes will include the name of the school in the header, an attendance roster and a copy of the meeting notices. All to be forwarded to the District Office of Accountability.
1. Absence of Chair or Secretary  
The vice-chairperson will chair the meeting in absence of the chair. The Council will appoint an acting chair/secretary for the meeting if the chair vice-chair or secretary is absent.
  2. Quorum  
A quorum to conduct a business meeting requires 60% attendance of Council members. Of those present a simple majority rules. Only Council members can vote.
  3. Absence of Quorum
    - a. No motions may be considered or approved
    - b. If a majority wishes the meeting to proceed in the absence of a quorum, the Council will continue the meeting for purposes of discussion of issues.
  4. Protocol for Decision-Making
    - a. Consensus
      - The school Council is advisory in nature and every attempt should be made to reach consensus.
      - Consensus is a form of group decision making based on the willingness to consent and support. Consensus is reached when all or most members of the Council are willing to accept and support an idea or concept as the best choice.
    - b. Motions – If Required
      - Any member of the Council may make a motion at any meeting
      - Each member of the Council will have one vote on every motion.
      - A member of the Council may abstain from voting on any motion.
      - A motion is approved if a majority of the Council members present at the meeting vote in favor of it.

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## 5. Public Question Period

- Each school Council meeting agenda should contain a Public Question Period.
- People attending the meeting, who are not school Council members, can make a recommendation to the Chair that a particular item be placed on the subsequent agenda.

## Amendments

Amendments to the Operational Guidelines require:

- a. 75% representation of approved and appointed members and
- b. 75% majority vote in favor of the amendment

## Strategies for Productive Meetings

1. Chairs, in consultation with the principals and other Council members, set the Agenda.
2. Advertise date, time, place and agenda of the meeting seven (7) days in advance.
3. Chairs should plan ahead, be prepared and start on time.
4. Review agenda so that it can be changed or expanded to accommodate new ideas and priorities. Time limits for individual agenda items will have to be set.
5. Discuss one piece of business at a time.
6. Strive to make decisions by consensus, however, if a vote is necessary, all Council members are equal and can vote. A majority vote of those members present is required for approval. Votes can be verbal or ballot.
7. Put aside problems or issues that are raised in the course of the meeting that sidetrack you from the agenda. Move to the next agenda item. If these problems or issues are significant but not relevant to that task at hand, return to them later when developing the next meeting agenda.
8. Work continually to involve all members. Encourage participation by all, even the quietest members. (Participation is a right... and a responsibility). What a person says should reflect what he or she thinks as well as feels. Conduct group business in front of the group, conduct personal business outside

of the meeting. Develop conditions of respect, acceptance, trust and caring.

9. Develop alternative approaches to solving problems. You are far more likely to choose the best path if you generate as many possible alternatives as possible.
10. Consider the timing of your discussion. Quickly answer these questions. Is the person or group most affected at the meeting? Does the group have enough high quality information at this point? Has the person or group who will be responsible for acting on the advice been consulted? If the item requires more time, the Council should decide to amend the agenda or refer it to the next meeting or to a sub-committee.
11. Assign follow-up actions and responsibilities. Share/delegate responsibilities as much as possible to keep the workload manageable.
12. Summarize what has been accomplished.

## Achieving Consensus

### *Decision-Making through Consensus*

The school Council recommendations will generally be most effective when developed by consensus. Consensus means that everyone can live with the final recommendations made by the school Council. Consensus is group decision-making, based on willingness to consent and support, rather than having a winning and losing side by voting. It allows ownership of ideas by all school Council members as being the best choice. Although it might be necessary to vote on an issue, consensus is still the preferred method of decision-making.

Consensus also offers a process for resolving conflicts. Consensus may be difficult to reach, so not every decision will meet with everyone's complete approval.

Consensus has been reached when participants can say;

- I believe you understand your point of view.
- Whether or not I prefer this idea or concept. I will support it because it was reached openly and fairly.

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Consensus is the preferred process for reaching important decisions. The School Advisory Council may choose consensus because, while it takes more time, participants usually feel more involved and committed to the decisions.

The School Advisory Council can reach its decisions through consensus and then present those decisions as motions. The votes on the motions in this case should be unanimous.

## Deciding How to Decide

The School Advisory Council will have to make decisions about the advice it will provide for the principal and the school board. The following are the basic steps in making any decision.

1. Identify the issue or problem. (What decision do we have to make?)
2. List the alternatives or solutions. (What are our choices?)
3. Explore and weigh the solutions. (What is good and bad about each?)
4. Choose the best solution. (Which solution is best?)
5. Plan to implement the solution. (How can the solution chosen be implemented?)
6. Evaluate the results. (Did we choose the best solution?)

The School Advisory Council's decision can be determined either by consensus or by majority vote. If you choose majority vote, you should all be well informed and, as a group, you should discuss all of the implications before a vote is called by the chair. While the vote will decide the issue, some members may feel that they "lost" and thus be less committed to the decision. So for decisions that are crucial to the achievement of your Council's goals, consensus is the best method. With the consensus method, as a group, you fully discuss the decision to be made, expressing your own ideas, listening carefully to others; opinions, and trying to find alternatives to which everyone can agree. Because you all participate in a consensual decision, you all have the chance to influence and understand the decision. As a result, the final decision

is reached without conflict and will likely receive everyone's support. To summarize, consensus:

- Gives you and all the other Council members an effective voice in decisions;
- builds on differing perspectives and values;
- allows for flexibility in arriving at solutions;
- can result in better informed, more creative, balanced, and enduring decisions;
- ensures that the final decision has the support of everyone, thus promoting a sense of commitment to and ownership in the decision.
- creates a sense of common purpose;
- allows you and the other Council members to maintain the integrity of your personal values while agreeing to a new solution.

Consensus takes time, commitment, patience, and persistence. As a process it will strengthen our team by building trust, valuing the diversity of opinions, and energizing and involving all members as equal participants.

## Effective Conflict Resolution

1. Suspend judgment. Nothing escalates a conflict faster than a judgmental comment. When we feel we are being judged or our values or competence are being questioned, we become anxious, resistant and sometimes hostile. Rather, try to describe what you see or feel without implying blame or interpreting motives.
2. Deal with the present. Nothing is really accomplished by dealing with the dead past or the uncertain future.
3. Pay attention to non-verbal communication. Your "body language" communicates at least as much as your words.
4. Use "I" messages. Describe how you feel in response to their behavior (e.g. "I really worry when... "or" I feel frustrated because...")
5. Choose your words carefully. Avoid words that guarantee escalation: don't, ought, should, always, never, and must.
6. Allow withholding of information. "You don't have to tell me everything" usually increases the likelihood that they will tell you more.

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7. Be an active listener. Attend to the act of listening (eyecontact,nodding,andposture). Encourage stay quiet, holdbackcriticismand resist the temptation to butt in.
8. Restate/paraphrase what you hear. Seek clarification inatentative,notaggressive, manner.
9. Bewareofquestionsthat seektopunishthe recipientor thathide your true motives. Avoid “why” questions.
10. Utilize the power of silence and delayed response to control the pace of communication. But don’t overuse silence.
11. The antidotetoargument: don’t be afraid to say “you might be right.”
12. Avoid interpreting motives.
13. Never give advice to other Council members. Although advice is usually a well meaning attempttoteach, preach,explain,command,or suggest, in conflict situations none of these is needed, wanted or appreciated.

## Resources

### **Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Handbook**

Landrum Middle School Advisory Council

AlbertCampbellSchoolAdvisoryCouncil  
Constitution

SchoolDistrictofIndianRiverCountyguidelines for School  
AdvisoryCouncils

OperationalGuidelinesforMiltonHighSchool Advisory  
Council

Florida State Statue School Laws

SchoolAdvisoryCouncilStateofFlorida,  
Department ofEducation

*Thank you to these resources for sharing.*