

BY LAWS
THE STEERING COMMITTEE
GRAHAM AND PARKS ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL
Approved by vote of the Graham & Parks Steering Committee on November 18, 2004

Article I General

The name of the governing body of the Graham and Parks Alternative Public School is the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee, which represents both staff and parents, is a policy-making body of the school. The Steering Committee is integrally involved in the management of the school. It deliberates on matters affecting the school, except those decided by the Cambridge School Committee, the Cambridge Teachers' Association, and the Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools.

Article II Purpose

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to:

- A. Support the continuing development of Graham and Parks as a JK-5 alternative public school, under the jurisdiction of the Cambridge School Committee and the Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools, in accordance with informal/open education theory and practice, as described in the mission and vision statement of Graham and Parks, and in particular, interdisciplinary, project based/expeditionary learning;
- B. Encourage diversity in the staff and student population and ensure that the classes in the school are heterogeneously grouped;
- C. Involve the parents and the staff in the operation of the school. The Steering Committee seeks to balance the interest of both groups in the decision-making process of the school and to be the major forum where individual and group differences are worked out;
- D. Assure that all individuals within the community are treated with respect and encourage an atmosphere in which diversity is seen as adding to the richness of the school.

Article III Powers and Responsibilities

- A. Plan and implement programs to support, strengthen, and develop both the theoretical and practical purposes set forth in Article II above.
- B. Oversee the selection of hiring committees for teaching, administrative, and support staff. The Steering Committee will delegate responsibility for the selection of hiring committees to a committee comprised of one family member and one staff member of the Steering Committee. Hiring committees will be composed of equal numbers of staff and parents, whose members will be representative of the school's population, whenever possible. The Steering Committee will, as needed, provide

- overall guidance and review for the hiring process. For example, the Steering Committee could define the school's needs and expectations for an open staff position, lay out how the school expects to work with the School Department in a specific hiring process, advise on the selection and composition of hiring committees, or discuss any other matter related to the hiring of Graham and Parks personnel.
- C. Establish policies and serve in an advisory capacity to the school administration. Areas of policy development include, but are not limited to, the establishment of procedures for the hiring of staff, the development and updating of the school improvement plan, the development of the school's budget proposal, the physical plant, parent involvement, parent education, staff development, grants, special programs, curriculum and fund raising.
 - D. Develop sub-committees and ad hoc committees to help do the work of the school. These committees will be used to encourage substantial staff and family participation in the operation of the school and to encourage a wide range of input into the decision-making process.
 - E. Establish policies and procedures for the evaluation of various aspects of the school's programs.
 - F. The Steering Committee shall, as part of its advisory role, examine the school's budget proposals. The Steering Committee shall be involved in all matters relating to the school budget, including grants. This includes maintaining a liaison with the Friends of Graham and Parks and encouraging parent and staff input into financial affairs. The Steering Committee may appoint a financial officer or committee to assist in these matters.
 - G. Recognizing that Graham and Parks embraces diversity of all types, the Steering Committee is responsible for representation of the needs of all groups and individuals within the school.

Article IV Limitations of the Steering Committee

- A. The Steering Committee cannot make policy on matters that reside with the Cambridge Teachers' Association, the Cambridge School Committee, and the Superintendent of the Cambridge Public School District—e.g. evaluation of staff, staff salaries, etc. If the Steering Committee disagrees with policies established by these three bodies, it will advocate for change with the appropriate body.
- B. The Steering Committee is a policy-making and advisory body. It is not involved in the day-to-day implementation of policy, which resides with the Principal and the staff. When a clear distinction between policy and implementation cannot be made, the Steering Committee will decide whether or not to address such matters on a case-by-case basis.

Article V Membership

The voting members of the Steering Committee consists of five (5) parents elected by parents, five (5) staff elected by staff, the Family Liaison, and a community member (Community School Director and/or Dragonfly Afterschool Director), and the Principal. Every effort will be made to maintain a Steering Committee that reflects the diversity of the school. The Assistant Principal / Operations Manager will be a non-voting member of the Steering Committee, except in cases where she or he is fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of the principal.

The Steering Committee will actively seek non-voting members from the community to serve in an advisory role, providing the school with community perspectives and links to outside resources.

Article VI Election

- A. Parent members are elected by parents and the staff members are elected by staff in September or October of each year. Each family has two (2) ballots, while each staff person has one (1) vote. Each member shall hold office for a term of one (1) year.
- B. Vacancies: Interim vacancies will be filled by the Steering Committee, which will seek volunteers from the appropriate group, with notice of vacancy widely distributed to staff and parents.
- C. Membership of Steering Committee members who miss three consecutive meetings or four within one school year will be reviewed by the Steering Committee to determine whether a replacement is necessary.

Article VII Officers

The officers consist of two Co-Chairpersons and a Recording Secretary, and other officers with such powers and duties as the Steering Committee may determine. The officers are elected from among the members of the Steering Committee by majority vote. If any office is unfilled, the duties of that office become the responsibility of all Steering Committee members who are not officers.

- A. Co-Chairpersons: This office is held by one parent and one staff member or one non-administrator staff person. The duty of these officers is to jointly oversee and direct the Committee's meetings in a fair and productive manner. This includes preparing an agenda for each meeting and directing the discussions in a way that promotes clarity, understanding, and a full hearing of all views in a concise and respectful manner. The co-chairs will also handle written communications from the Steering Committee, notify the community of all meetings, and handle other occasional correspondence from the Committee.

- B. Recording Secretary: The duty of this office is to take and keep minutes of all Steering Committee meetings and distribute the minutes of each meeting prior to the next meeting.

Article VIII Procedures

- A. Meetings: Meetings will be held at least once a month of the school year at a time agreed upon by the members
- B. Special Meetings: Special Meetings may be called, upon the concurrence of the Co-Chairpersons and the Principal.
- C. Minutes: Minutes of each meeting will be kept, published, and distributed to parents and staff within a reasonable time after each meeting.
- D. Notice of Meetings: Notice of meetings and a tentative agenda will be published for staff and parents five (5) days prior to the next meeting.
- E. Quorum and Voting: A quorum consists of two-thirds (2/3) of the total number of members of the Steering Committee, of which three (3) must be parents and three (3) must be staff. Each member has one (1) vote. Motions require a majority vote of the quorum to be passed. In case of a tie vote, the decision of the Principal will prevail.
- F. Significant Policies. In matters of significant policy, the Steering Committee will make every effort to obtain input on such issues from the full staff and the parents, the Principal and appropriate committees before a determination of a policy is made by a majority vote of the Committee. Notice that such a matter of policy will be considered must be sent to all parents and staff at least five (5) days in advance of the meeting.
- G. Consensus and Voting: On policy matters, the Steering Committee will seek consensus. If, after reasonable discussion, consensus cannot be reached, then a majority vote of the quorum present will constitute a policy decision. Such matters of policy will include, but not be limited to, the establishment of procedures for the hiring of personnel, program evaluation, the development of the school's budget, curriculum and fundraising.
- H. Substantial School Changes: In matters involving substantial change in the operation or conditions of the school, the Steering Committee will make recommendations, which will be submitted for consideration to the full staff. At least one week's prior written notice must be given. Such recommendations shall become effective on approval by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Steering Committee. Parents and staff must be given reasonable time to consider and to make recommendations concerning such matters prior to the determination by the Steering Committee. In practical terms, this means that the staff will have considered the recommended change in one or more of its meetings and a reasonable effort will have been made to gather feedback from families prior to the

Steering Committee determination. The Steering Committee will poll both staff and parents on matters of substantial school change.

- I. Committees: The Steering Committee—upon its own recommendations, upon the recommendations of the Principal, or the Staff—may appoint such standing and other committees with such duties and powers as it may from time to time determine. The purpose of such committees is to gather information and resources to deal with the emerging and on-going needs of the school community. Such committees will report to the Steering Committee monthly, making recommendations when necessary. Committees and sub-committees cannot be delegated decision-making powers. As far as possible, each Steering Committee member should be responsible for one committee, serving on it and representing it to the Steering Committee. Examples of such committees include: Hiring, Building and Grounds, and Fundraising.
- J. Interim Policies: Problems may arise which require the formulation of policy more quickly than the Steering Committee can respond. In such cases, the Principal will formulate policy, having consulted insofar as possible with members of the Steering Committee. Such decisions will be reported to the Committee at its next meeting and be subject to review at that time. In such cases, the Principal should inform the affected parties that the policy is an interim one.
- K. Open Meetings and Confidentiality: The meetings of the Steering Committee will be open except in cases where the confidentiality of a staff member or a family member may be involved. Generally, matters, which involve confidentiality, will not come before the Steering Committee but will be dealt with by the Principal (e.g. evaluation) or a relevant committee (e.g. grievance of a class placement). However, there may be instances where it is possible that a policy matter involving confidentiality will arise and in such circumstances the Steering Committee will meet in closed session.
- L. Dissolution: The Steering Committee can be dissolved at any time its usefulness is deemed terminated by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the total membership of the Committee.

Article IX Parent Council

Currently, Graham and Parks does not have a Parent Counsel. In the event that a Parent Counsel is formed, the following article will govern its activities.

- A. Membership: Membership in the Parent Council shall be automatic for any parent or guardian having a child registered and attending the Graham and Parks Alternative Public School
- B. Function: The Parent Council is organized for the purpose of directly involving parents in the operation of the school. This includes at least two

main functions: giving each parents or guardian a voice in the policies which govern the conditions in which their children learn, and providing parents with the information about the school's operation.

- C. Implementation: The Parent Council will organize itself—meetings, agenda, roles, rules of functioning, etc. It will meet regularly, usually on a monthly basis. Part of the meetings will provide a forum for parents and guardians to discuss their ideas on matters affecting the school and to bring their concerns or issues to the attention of the entire community. It is the responsibility of the parents' elected representatives to the Steering Committee to communicate the ideas and opinions of the parent body to the Steering Committee.

Article X Staff

- A. Membership: All teaching, administrative and support personnel are members of the school's staff. In their roles on the Steering Committee, however, the Principal and the Parent Liaison are not considered staff.
- B. Function: The staff has a dual role. One part is to participate in the decision-making process of the school, both outside as well as inside the classroom, so that each member has a voice in determining the policies which govern the conditions in which they work. The other role is to work within the framework of the educational programs and policies as set forth by the Steering Committee, the Cambridge School Department, and the Cambridge School Committee.
- C. Implementation: The Staff will organize itself—meetings, agenda, roles, rules of functioning, etc. The staff will meet regularly as a whole and in small groups to carry out its functions. As part of their role, the staff needs to discuss their ideas on matters affecting the school. It is the responsibility of the staff's elected representatives to the Steering Committee to communicate ideas and opinions of the staff to the Steering Committee.

Article XI Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended at a regular or a special meeting of the Steering Committee by a majority vote of the total membership of the Committee. Notice of such amendment must be presented to the members at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

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