Former TOPS bylaws
Adopted 3/96; superseded by new bylaws adopted 5/14/03

Bylaws of the TOPS at Seward Site Council

I. STATEMENTS OF MISSION AND PURPOSE

A. Vision Statement

TOPS students achieve academic success and emotional maturity. They are active community participants, critical thinkers, and problem solvers and they respect themselves and others. The TOPS environment has appropriate expectations in an atmosphere of appreciation and support. It encourages exploration of peers, community and the world and involves all members in on-going creation of a small, integrated K-8 program.

B. Mission Statement

The following characteristics of the TOPS program are designed to realize the vision statement:

- We seek to maintain our status as a relatively small, K-8 school available on a completely voluntary basis to Seattle families;
- We seek also to maintain close proximity to the central city as an important and unique member of the downtown community, encouraging the use and enjoyment of the urban environment as a rich, diverse resource and as an extension of the classroom;
- We provide a strong, academically challenging program where the core curriculum and basic learning skills are consistent with and exceed the minimum requirements of each grade level, with a goal of maximizing each individual student's potential;
- TOPS provides students with important and regular opportunities for decision making by involving them in a variety of settings including small groups, independent investigations, and elective "choice" classes in which they study courses of interest to them;
- We are committed to regular cross-age groups in a range of activities which include instructional, tutorial, and special events;
- We provide, within the regular student schedule, programs that directly address the personal, social and emotional growth of students, including skills of conflict resolution, social and personal responsibility, values and self-esteem;
- We support and encourage innovation and risk-taking on the part of the entire school community in the pursuit of an improved learning environment;
- We maintain and embrace a diverse population, strengthened by an instructional program which fosters awareness, knowledge and appreciation of the contributions of our multi-cultural and pluralistic urban society;
- We strive for an overall school environment which is engaging, active, positive, and supportive, seeking a balance between structure and nurtured independence; and
- Our community of students, their families, and school staff are seen as partners in the development and implementation of the program.
C. Purpose of the bylaws

These bylaws establish a set of rules and procedures approved by the TOPS school community to guide the governance functions of the site council.

D. Purpose of the site council

The site council serves as the governing body of the school, with responsibilities for leadership, advocacy, financial stewardship, strategic planning and assuring the highest standards of educational excellence. We operate under the current school district policy with regard to site councils.

II. MEMBERSHIP

A. Expectations

Members of the site council represent and are expected to communicate with their constituency, but they vote in the best interests of the school as a whole. Members of the site council are not paid for their services to the site council.

B. Community

The TOPS at Seward Site Community shall be defined as: the building principal; all certificated and classified staff; all in-building programs; all parents or legal guardians of children enrolled in TOPS; enrolled students; and all members of the TOPS attendance area.

C. Site Council

The site council membership shall consist of 25 individuals, and 13 of these shall be employed to work at TOPS. The 13 staff members shall include the principal, certificated and non-certificated staff, including representatives from the school's academic and child care programs (e.g., BOC, Kids Company). There shall be 12 non-staff members, including parents and guardians of children enrolled in TOPS, a student from middle school and residents of the Eastlake community (of the TOPS attendance area).

D. Elections/Voting

With the exception of the building principal, the childcare program representative, and the appointed "diversity parent" representative, members of the site council will be elected. Efforts will be made to recruit members who are representative of the entire school population, especially with regard to ethnic and economic diversity. Each member has one vote. The membership of the site council will include:

- Building principal;
- Ten certificated staff representatives, based on student enrollment; from the middle school, the elementary school, the BOC, and at large, elected by the entire certificated staff (teachers, librarians, etc.);
- One non-certificated staff representative, elected by the non-certificated staff (office staff, custodians, food service workers, aides, etc.);
- One representative from the childcare program in the building, currently Kids Company;
- 9 parents, based proportionately on student enrollment in the following clusters:

  a) from K through Grade 2,
b) from Grade 3 through Grade 5,
c) from Grade 6 through Grade 8, and
d) at large.

Each parent site council member shall be elected by the TOPS parents through mail ballot. The cluster an elected parent represents is determined by the grade the child will attend the Sept. following the spring election; a parent with two or more children must decide which cluster s/he will represent. A parent representative must be the parent, legal guardian or foster parent of a child enrolled at TOPS at the time of the election and is not employed at TOPS by the Seattle School District. A parent must resign from the site council when his or her student(s) stop attending TOPS.

- One "diversity parent" position is appointed to the site council by the executive committee, whose role it will be to promote the minority interests of the parent and student bodies.
- One community representative with one vote, to be chosen by the Eastlake Community Council. The community representative must not be a parent.
- One student representative is chosen by the TOPS Middle School Student Council.

E. Membership Terms

The Site Council membership shall be for two years with elections in May. The term begins at the June meeting. If a member resigns before the end of his or her term, his or her replacement shall serve to the end of the member's term and shall be eligible to serve an additional full term. All terms will be for two years with parents and students serving a maximum of two consecutive terms. Replacements will be appointed by the site council executive committee and ratified by the voting membership of the site council.

F. Removal of members

An elected member of the site council may be removed from office for misfeasance, malfeasance and non-feasance by a recall election which may be initiated by the site council or the constituency group from which the member was elected in one of the following manners. The site council may request a recall election after a three-fourths majority vote of its members; or the constituency group (e.g., parents, faculty, classified staff) may request a recall election by petition containing the signatures of 5% of its bona fide members. The recall election will then be conducted by the appropriate constituency group within 60 days after the recall motion or petition.

G. Nominations Process

The executive committee of the site council shall appoint a nominations committee to recruit at least two candidates for each open parent and faculty position prior to the scheduled election. Candidates shall be sought who represent the diversity of the school population, who are committed to the concept of school self-governance, and who would be energetic, positive and progressive site council members. The nominating committee shall supervise the elections process, and shall also see to it that the Eastlake Community Council, the student council, the childcare and the diversity parent positions are filled in the manner proscribed in these bylaws.

III. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A. Leadership
There shall be four officers of the site council--chair, assistant chair, secretary, and treasurer. These officers shall be elected by the site council at its June meeting for the following academic year. Those at the June meeting whose terms are expiring shall not vote on new officers. An officer's term shall be no longer than two years. Members are not eligible to run for chair or treasurer unless they have served at least a year on the site council within the last two years. The assistant chair may be selected with the intention of preparing to serve as chair. An executive committee, consisting of the principal, the elected officers and any other individuals or positions deemed necessary by the executive committee will serve as a leadership team.

B. Chair

The powers and duties of the chair shall be to have general supervision, direction, and control of the business and affairs of the site council.

C. Assistant Chair

The role of the assistant chair shall be to aid the chair in carrying out his or her functions, and to learn the job in preparation for running for chair at the appropriate time.

D. Secretary

The powers and duties of the secretary are to keep minutes of the all the site council meetings, to maintain all important documents (such as bylaws, plan), to maintain and annually publish "the roster," to see that all notices are given with the provisions of these bylaws or as required by law, and generally, to perform all duties of the secretary as required by the executive committee of the site council.

E. Treasurer

The treasurer shall chair the finance and budget committee, and shall supervise the work of the appointed financial manager.

F. Principal

The principal of the school serves automatically on the site council (although is not eligible to serve as chair), and his or her powers and duties are as described in school district policy.

IV. MEETINGS

A. Calling Meetings

The site council shall meet on a monthly basis in a designated meeting room within the school. A quorum consists of a majority of the membership. The annual meeting calendar shall be placed in the school directory and the newsletter, and shall be announced at all parent meetings. Emergency meetings may be called by the executive committee, with 24-hours notice posted in the school office, a phone call to all members and an announcement on the information line. All meetings are open and public. The site council encourages active participation from the entire school community.

B. Absenteeism
If a member has two consecutive unexcused absences, the chair shall contact the person, requesting an explanation of the absences and the member's intentions about remaining on the site council. Said member may be subject to removal by the executive committee.

C. Agenda Preparation and Distribution

The executive committee shall prepare and distribute an agenda for each site council meeting seven days in advance of such meeting.

D. Committees

The site council shall create committees to accomplish its tasks, and shall solicit members to compose such committees. The committees shall select their own chairs (except Budget & Finance, which is chaired by the elected treasurer, and nominating committee, whose chair is appointed by the executive committee). Committees may involve people who are not on the site council, and will determine their own meeting schedules. Committees are expected to send representatives to the site council meetings to report on their activities, and are permitted to participate fully in site council discussions. The only committees the site council is required to create are the Budget & finance committee and the Nominating committee.

E. Decision Making

Decisions shall be made by consensus. The chair of the site council is responsible for moving the group towards, and listening for, consensus. Consensus means that all present are afforded an opportunity to participate in the discussion, everyone understands the issue under discussion, and that the minority is assured the issue will be revisited within a specified period of time. Consensus does not mean that everyone necessarily agrees or that everyone thinks the decision is best. The minority must be willing to allow the majority to move forward, and the majority must have the courage to make progress in the face of minority opposition. In cases of serious division where there is no clear majority, the issue shall remain undecided until a majority position emerges. While everyone present is eligible to participate in the discussion, those named as members of the site council in section II(B) shall be asked to raise hands in favor and/or opposition when necessary.

F. Records

A file of the current strategic plan, site council policies, and minutes shall be maintained by the secretary in the school library and/or the school office at all times. Minutes of the last site council meeting shall be mailed to all site council members, along with the agenda of the upcoming meeting, at least one week prior to each meeting.

G. Plan and Policy Adoption

The site council shall be responsible for adopting an annual strategic plan. It shall also adopt policies which it believes contribute to academic excellence and building a sense of community.

H. Principal Evaluation and Selection

The site council shall participate in an annual evaluation of the principal, and will actively participate in the selection of a new principal should a vacancy occur.
I. Financial Manager

The site council shall appoint a qualified financial manager to supervise, control and report the site council assets. The manager shall report to the site council's Finance and Budget Committee. The chair of the Finance and Budget Committee is the site council member elected to serve as treasurer.

V. BYLAWS CHANGES

Bylaws modifications may be made by consensus of the site council membership when: 1) the proposed changes have been announced in the school newsletter and 2) the proposed changes have been discussed at one meeting and are voted on at the following meeting.

VI. DISSOLUTION

The site council may dissolve itself at any time provided it believes it has given the school community adequate time and opportunity for discussion.