SPARTANBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT SEVEN

THE CLEVELAND ACADEMY OF LEADERSHIP

School Improvement Council Bylaws

Proposed for council review and adoption | 2026–2027

PLANTING SEEDS OF POSSIBILITIES

A council that turns community voice into shared responsibility, measurable improvement, and greater opportunity for every Cleveland Tiger.

Prepared using the supplied SIC bylaw example, South Carolina SIC guidance, current state law, and peer-reviewed research on equitable family–school partnerships.

Status: Draft only. Not in force until adopted and any required external review is completed.

ARTICLE I | Name and Legal Authority

Section 1. Name. The organization shall be known as The Cleveland Academy of Leadership School Improvement Council (hereafter "Council" or "SIC"), serving The Cleveland Academy of Leadership in Spartanburg School District Seven, South Carolina.

Section 2. Authority. The Council operates pursuant to applicable South Carolina law, including S.C. Code Ann. § 59-20-60, relevant provisions of Title 59, the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), district policy, and the bylaws adopted by the Council. In the event of a conflict, governing law and district requirements prevail.

Section 3. Nature of the body. The SIC is a representative, school-level advisory body; it does not exercise the legal powers of the principal, superintendent, district board of trustees, or other duly authorized officials.

ARTICLE II | Purpose and Responsibilities

Section 1. Purpose. The Council shall advance student learning, well-being, and school improvement by bringing together families, educators, community partners, and school leadership in sustained, collaborative problem-solving. Its work shall align with Cleveland's School Renewal Plan, district priorities, and the aspiration that every child receives excellent instruction and meaningful opportunities to thrive.

Section 2. Statutory and operational responsibilities. The Council shall:

- Participate in development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and annual updating of the school's five-year School Renewal/Improvement Plan, using both results and implementation evidence.
- Develop and distribute the annual SIC Report to Parents, reporting plainly on school goals, progress, council priorities, and outcomes; coordinate required publication and uploading according to current SC-SIC, state, and district deadlines.
- Assist the principal with the school narrative for the South Carolina School Report Card and provide input on school improvement, innovation, early literacy, and relevant academic-assistance priorities as applicable.
- Advise on the use of any school incentive grant awards when allocated, and consider other improvement-related matters referred by the principal or district board within the Council's advisory scope.
- Facilitate two-way communication among the school, its families, neighborhood organizations, and the wider community; elevate themes from families without discussing identifiable student or personnel cases.
- When authorized under law and district procedure, communicate recommendations or a separate report to the district board of trustees.

Section 3. Focus. The Council's annual work shall prioritize a manageable number of measurable schoolwide needs, informed by attendance, achievement and growth, student experience, family feedback, and other appropriately aggregated information. It shall not become an individual grievance hearing, student discipline panel, or personnel committee.

ARTICLE III | Principles for Equitable Participation

The Council shall work in ways that reflect Cleveland's commitment to servant leadership, student success, and "Forward Together." Meetings and decisions shall demonstrate reciprocal listening, shared ownership, transparent follow-through, cultural and linguistic responsiveness, and respect for family expertise.

Recognizing that families may experience mobility, nontraditional schedules, transportation constraints, language barriers, or limited technology access, the Council shall offer more than one reasonable channel for participation. These may include varied meeting times, translated communications or interpretation when feasible, paper and digital input, and accessible two-way outreach. No family shall be excluded from participation because of a lack of prior school involvement.

ARTICLE IV | Membership and Representation

Section 1. Voting membership. The Council shall ordinarily have eleven (11) elected and appointed voting members:

Category	Seats	Representation
Parent / guardian (elected)	4	Two seats associated with 4K–Grade 2 and two with Grades 3–5.
Teacher (elected)	4	Two teachers serving 4K–Grade 2 and two serving Grades 3–5.
Community (appointed)	3	Community representatives selected by the principal; seek varied neighborhood, civic, nonprofit, and business perspectives.

The eight elected seats constitute 8 of 11 voting seats (72.7%), exceeding the legal requirement that elected members comprise at least two-thirds of elected and appointed members. At least two elected parents and two elected teachers must serve at all times, subject to prompt filling of vacancies.

Section 2. Ex-officio participants. The principal shall serve as a nonvoting ex-officio member. The Council may identify up to four additional nonvoting ex-officio participants, such as the PTA/PTO leader (if applicable), Title I family advisory representative, Teacher of the Year, or school community resource coordinator. Ex-officio participants have full discussion privileges but do not count toward the election ratio or quorum and do not hold council officer positions.

Section 3. Eligibility and balance. Parents/guardians must have a child currently enrolled at Cleveland; teachers must be assigned to Cleveland at the time they serve. Parents with students in more than one grade band may stand for one seat category per election. Members shall seek to represent the interests of all students, not solely the students, grades, or organizations with which they are personally affiliated. Appointments should add perspectives not already well represented, rather than create a second tier of appointed parent or teacher substitutes.

Section 4. Nonvoting guests. Students (through age-appropriate listening activities), caregivers, staff, neighborhood leaders, and other stakeholders may contribute through open meetings, listening sessions, surveys, and invited presentations. Public participation does not confer voting membership.

ARTICLE V | Nominations, Elections, and Appointments

Section 1. Timing. Elections for expiring parent and teacher seats shall occur each school year no later than October 15, in compliance with state law. Newly elected and appointed members shall be seated promptly. Membership information shall be furnished to SC-SIC within thirty (30) days after election and entered or confirmed in the SC-SIC Member Network by November 15, or earlier if required by current procedures.

Section 2. Accessible nominations. At least ten (10) calendar days before voting, the school shall publicly invite nominations through multiple channels reasonably accessible to families and faculty, explaining eligibility, seat categories, term length, how to nominate, how to vote, and whom to contact for assistance. Self-nominations and nominations with the candidate's consent shall be allowed.

Section 3. Parent elections. Every eligible parent or legal guardian shall have an opportunity to vote for parent representatives regardless of which grades their children attend. Voting shall provide a secret, secure method, with paper and electronic options where feasible. Each eligible voter may cast only one ballot; families with multiple children are not granted additional ballots. The school shall publish accessible voting instructions, maintain a voting period of no fewer than five (5) school days, and fairly verify eligibility without unnecessarily collecting private data.

Section 4. Teacher elections. Teacher representatives shall be elected by the faculty through a confidential process that gives all eligible faculty members an opportunity to vote. Grade-band seats designate candidate eligibility, not separate faculty electorates.

Section 5. Integrity and results. A small election team designated by the Council and principal shall count and certify votes; candidates may not count ballots for an election in which they compete. Ties shall be resolved through a neutral runoff or publicly announced random drawing. Results and terms shall be shared promptly with the school community, while individual ballots and personal voter information shall be protected and retained in accordance with applicable retention schedules.

Section 6. Community appointments. Within thirty (30) days following the annual election, the principal, after consulting elected members, shall appoint qualified community members for open seats. Appointments shall preserve the statutory elected-member ratio and favor varied expertise, meaningful neighborhood connection, and a demonstrated commitment to all Cleveland students.

ARTICLE VI | Terms, Vacancies, and Attendance

Section 1. Terms. Elected parent and teacher members shall ordinarily serve staggered two-year terms; parent members whose children are in their final year at Cleveland may serve a one-year term where permitted by state law. Appointed community members shall serve two-year terms unless a vacancy appointment is made for the unexpired portion of a term. There is no term limit, but members must be reelected or reappointed when a term expires.

Section 2. Staggering. Approximately half of each elected category shall be elected each year. In an initial organizational transition, the Council shall use a documented method consistent with statutory minimum terms and stagger requirements; any transitional arrangement shall be reviewed with district or SC-SIC personnel before implementation.

Section 3. Vacancies. An elected seat becomes vacant upon resignation, loss of applicable eligibility, death, or removal in accordance with these bylaws. The Council shall first offer the unexpired term to the next eligible candidate from the most recent election for that seat, if available and willing; otherwise it shall arrange a timely special election. The principal shall replace appointed members after consulting elected members. Vacancies shall be addressed expeditiously to maintain legally required membership and representative balance.

Section 4. Attendance and supportive outreach. Members are expected to attend and prepare for meetings. After two unexcused consecutive absences, the chairperson shall contact the member to identify barriers or needs. A member who misses three consecutive scheduled meetings without reasonable notice or accommodation may be removed by a two-thirds vote of seated voting members following written notice and an opportunity to respond. A departure should not be used to penalize a member for advocating respectfully or raising concerns.

ARTICLE VII | Officers and Duties

Section 1. Officers. At the first meeting after the annual elections, the voting membership shall elect a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary for one-year terms. Officers must be elected or appointed voting members. No officer position may be held by the principal or another ex-officio participant. Leadership should not be concentrated in a single membership category whenever qualified nominees from multiple categories are available.

Section 2. Chairperson. The chairperson shall preside over meetings, facilitate fair participation, consult with the principal on agendas, ensure follow-through on voted actions, communicate recommendations, and oversee committee coordination. The chairperson, not the principal, ordinarily chairs SIC meetings.

Section 3. Vice chairperson. The vice chairperson shall perform the chairperson's duties in the chairperson's absence and support recruitment, inclusion, and action monitoring.

Section 4. Secretary. The secretary shall record attendance, motions, votes, minutes, and action items; distribute draft minutes promptly; preserve adopted documents and publicly available records; and maintain an up-to-date membership and terms roster in cooperation with school administration. Contact information shall be protected from unnecessary public disclosure.

Section 5. Succession. If an officer resigns or becomes ineligible, the Council shall elect a replacement at the next properly noticed meeting.

ARTICLE VIII | Meetings and Public Participation

Section 1. Calendar. The Council shall schedule at least eight (8) regular meetings each school year, with reasonable options for family participation. Continuing members may meet before elections to initiate school-year work; the reorganized council shall convene by October 31. The regular meeting schedule shall also be publicly noticed as required by FOIA, including calendar-year notices.

Section 2. Public access. SIC meetings are open to the public except where an executive session is lawfully authorized. Notices and agendas shall be posted in the places, forms, and timeframes required by S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-80, including agendas at least twenty-four (24) hours before regular and special meetings and appropriate notice of rescheduled meetings. Internal practice will aim to circulate agendas and materials seven (7) days before meetings; this internal goal does not replace statutory notice.

Section 3. Special meetings. The chairperson or principal may request a special meeting when needed. Meetings shall not proceed without legally sufficient notice except where state law expressly permits an emergency procedure. The Council shall not use informal electronic discussions to circumvent open-meeting requirements.

Section 4. Public voice. The Council shall reserve reasonable time for public comment at regular meetings and make available a clear process for requesting future agenda items. The chairperson may establish neutral time limits applied equally. Individual complaints involving identifiable students, employees, or family matters shall be redirected to appropriate confidential school or district processes, not heard as an open SIC grievance.

Section 5. Virtual access. Remote attendance, online observation, and electronic participation may be offered when they comply with FOIA, district policy, and accessibility needs. No private online vote or rolling email poll shall substitute for a lawfully noticed public meeting.

ARTICLE IX | Quorum, Deliberation, and Voting

Section 1. Quorum. A quorum requires more than half of currently seated elected and appointed voting members, and must include at least one elected parent member and one elected teacher member. Under the standard eleven-member composition, six (6) voting members constitute a quorum. Ex-officio participants and guests do not count toward quorum.

Section 2. Deliberation. The Council shall seek consensus through respectful discussion, considering both qualitative community input and trustworthy schoolwide evidence. When a vote is necessary, an ordinary motion passes by a simple majority of votes cast by members present and voting, provided a quorum is maintained. Abstentions shall be recorded but not treated as affirmative votes.

Section 3. Voting methods. Each elected or appointed voting member has one vote. Proxies and absentee ballots are prohibited. Remote voting is allowed only if a member is participating in a duly noticed meeting in a manner consistent with law and district guidance. Voting results, including dissents when requested, shall appear in meeting minutes.

Section 4. Special thresholds. Officer removal, member removal under Article VI, and amendments under Article XIV require the greater majorities stated in those articles. The Council shall not conduct discretionary votes when a membership defect would violate state-law representation requirements.

ARTICLE X | Work Plan, Committees, and Evidence of Impact

Section 1. Annual priorities. By the second regular meeting following elections, the Council shall adopt a one-page work plan with no more than two principal improvement priorities, each stating (a) the student or family need, (b) baseline evidence, (c) a practical action, (d) a responsible lead or team, (e) an indicator of progress, and (f) a review date. The Council may modify priorities based on new evidence.

Section 2. Focus areas. Potential priorities include stronger school attendance, early literacy and numeracy, student belonging and safety, family-school communication, support for multilingual learners and students with disabilities, and expanded access to enrichment and community services. Priorities shall support rather than duplicate school and district operational responsibilities.

Section 3. Committees. Temporary workgroups may be formed by majority vote with a written scope, chair or lead, deadline, and reporting expectations. Committees may include interested nonmembers but cannot independently bind the Council, obligate district funds, or make confidential personnel or student decisions.

Section 4. Improvement cycles. At least quarterly, the Council shall review relevant aggregated indicators, family feedback, implementation progress, and barriers. Each recommendation requiring school action shall receive a

documented response from school leadership indicating the action taken, alternative selected, or reason it cannot be implemented.

ARTICLE XI | Transparency, Ethics, and Confidentiality

Section 1. Records. Approved agendas, minutes, meeting calendars, reports, and adopted work plans shall be maintained in an orderly school-based record and made publicly accessible as required by FOIA and district retention rules. Minutes shall capture actions and decisions without unnecessarily reproducing individual personal information.

Section 2. Confidentiality. Members shall not disclose personally identifiable student education records, protected employee information, or other restricted information. The Council shall use deidentified or aggregated data. Open-meeting requirements remain applicable; labeling an item "confidential" does not itself authorize a closed session.

Section 3. Conflicts. Members shall promptly disclose personal or financial interests that could impair impartial advice. Appropriate recusals, when required by law or district policy, shall be reflected in minutes. Appointment or elected membership must not be used to secure a private benefit or preferred treatment.

Section 4. Respectful conduct. Members shall deliberate without retaliation, intimidation, discriminatory conduct, or personal attacks. Members may disagree with recommendations and respectfully express dissent. The chairperson shall uphold consistent participation norms.

ARTICLE XII | Communication, Reporting, and Annual Evaluation

Section 1. Two-way outreach. The Council shall support at least two broad opportunities each school year for families and community stakeholders to share priorities, including options beyond attendance at a live SIC meeting. Outreach methods shall be periodically reviewed for who is and is not being heard.

Section 2. Annual Report to Parents. The Council shall prepare a concise, accessible annual Report to Parents that describes the school's progress on goals, the Council's work and outcomes, and how families can engage. Under current published SC-SIC administrative guidance, local distribution is expected by April 30 and upload to the SC-SIC Member Network by June 1; the Council shall follow any superseding legal, state, or district directive and confirm deadlines annually.

Section 3. Annual assessment. Before the close of the school year, the Council shall assess attendance and representation, family engagement, completion of work-plan commitments, progress indicators, member learning, and next-year priorities. A short year-end summary shall inform the following year's agenda.

ARTICLE XIII | Member Orientation and Capacity Building

The chairperson and principal shall arrange orientation for all members within sixty (60) days of their seating, covering the SIC's advisory authority, relevant statutes, FOIA and open-meeting rules, school improvement and reporting data, confidentiality, inclusive facilitation, and appropriate channels for school concerns. The Council shall encourage members to participate in SC-SIC and district training and provide clear, jargon-free materials to members and families.

ARTICLE XIV | Amendments, Review, and Adoption

Section 1. Annual review. These bylaws shall be reviewed at least once each school year and whenever state law, SC-SIC guidance, or district policy changes materially affect their operation.

Section 2. Amendments. A proposed amendment shall be provided in writing to voting members at least fourteen (14) calendar days before the meeting at which it is considered, and shall appear on a properly posted agenda. Adoption requires at least a two-thirds affirmative vote of seated voting members at a meeting with quorum, subject to any further district or SC-SIC requirements.

Section 3. Effective date. These bylaws become effective upon a recorded adoption vote by the Council, completion of any required SC-SIC review for a custom-drafted set of bylaws, and satisfaction of applicable district approval procedures. Prior bylaws, if any, remain governing until a lawful replacement becomes effective.

APPENDIX A | Annual SIC Operating Calendar

The following implementation schedule is a working guide, not a substitute for state law or district calendar requirements. Adjust meeting dates each year and retain FOIA-compliant public notice.

Timing	Key tasks
August–September	Review last year's outcomes; recruit candidates; publicize voting and the meeting calendar; invite family priorities; orient continuing members.
By October 15	Complete parent and teacher SIC elections; certify and publicly announce results.
October	Fill community appointments; elect officers; orient new members; review renewal-plan goals and select up to two priorities.
Within 30 days / by November 15	Report member names, addresses, roles, and terms to SC-SIC as required; ensure Member Network roster is complete by its published deadline.
November–February	Conduct listening opportunities; monitor priority measures and School Renewal Plan execution; provide recommendations and document responses.
March–April	Prepare family-friendly SIC Report to Parents, obtain accurate schoolwide evidence, and distribute locally by April 30 under current SC-SIC guidance.
May–June	Review outcomes and Council effectiveness; upload annual report to SC-SIC Member Network by June 1; record transition actions and next-year recommendations.
Every regular meeting	Publicly post agenda as FOIA requires; review the action tracker; invite principal update; record motions and minutes; provide public comment opportunity.

Compliance note. S.C. Code § 59-20-60(5) also references November 15 for annual school reports, while the SC-SIC Member Network currently instructs SICs to distribute their Report to Parents by April 30 and upload by June 1. District counsel or the SC-SIC office should confirm how these obligations apply to Cleveland before adoption.

APPENDIX B | Research Basis and Design Rationale

This appendix is explanatory and does not alter the operative provisions of the adopted bylaws.

Reciprocal partnership, not one-way outreach

Ishimaru (2019) identifies family capacity-building, relationship-building, and system capacity-building as strategies for more equitable family collaboration. Articles III, VIII, and XII therefore provide multiple pathways for parent voice and insist on visible responses to recommendations.

Effective leadership and sustainable participation

Epstein, Galindo, and Sheldon (2011) find that school and district leadership influence the quality of family and community involvement efforts. Articles VII, X, and XIII establish shared officer leadership, priorities, training, and disciplined follow-through rather than meeting attendance alone.

Meaningful council influence

Shatkin and Gershberg (2007) emphasize the importance of meaningful participation, parental support and training, and principal facilitation in school-based councils. Because South Carolina SICs are advisory, this draft builds influence through written recommendations, principal responses, publicly visible goals, and annual evaluation rather than suggesting independent management authority.

Sources and verification

South Carolina Code of Laws. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-20-60 (school improvement plans; SIC composition, elections, reports, responsibilities). https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t59c020.php

South Carolina Code of Laws. S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-80 (FOIA notice and agendas). https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t30c004.php

South Carolina School Improvement Council. (2026). SIC Member Network: Membership and Report to Parents deadlines. https://www.sc-sic.org/member-network

South Carolina School Improvement Council. Tips for Creating or Updating School Improvement Council Bylaws. https://sic.sc.gov/sites/sic/files/Documents/SICs%20%26%20SIC%20Leaders/Tips%20for%20Creating%20or%20Updating%20SIC%20Bylaws.pdf

South Carolina School Improvement Council. SIC Resource Library and bylaws guidance. https://www.sc-sic.org/resource-library

Ishimaru, A. M. (2019). From family engagement to equitable collaboration. Educational Policy, 33(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817691841

Epstein, J. L., Galindo, C. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2011). Levels of leadership: Effects of district and school leaders on the quality of school programs of family and community involvement. Educational Administration Quarterly, 47(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10396929

Shatkin, G., & Gershberg, A. I. (2007). Empowering parents and building communities: The role of school-based councils in educational governance and accountability. Urban Education, 42(6). https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907305044

User-provided reference: Mitchell Road Elementary School Improvement Council (SIC) Bylaws, 2012–2013 update (six-page sample supplied for adaptation).

APPENDIX C | Adoption and Implementation Record

This page is completed after review. Until adopted, the document remains a proposed template rather than the operating bylaws of Cleveland's Council.

Review and compliance steps

☐ Confirm that the school's existing adopted bylaws, if any, have been reviewed and that the correct amendment/replacement procedure is used.

☐ Confirm the 4 parent / 4 teacher / 3 community seat allocation, staggered terms, and election procedures with the district SIC coordinator.

☐ Forward the custom bylaws to SC-SIC for review if required; request district legal guidance on the Report to Parents timelines and any 2027–2028 changes.

☐ Publish the proposed adoption meeting and agenda in accordance with FOIA, and allow council members adequate time for review.

☐ Record the motion, quorum, vote tally, effective date, and any approval or review received; distribute the final copy publicly.

Council adoption certification

At a duly noticed meeting held on _____, the Council considered these bylaws. The vote was: _____ in favor; _____ opposed; _____ abstained. Quorum was verified: ☐ Yes ☐ No.

Date SC-SIC / district review completed (if applicable): _____

Effective date upon completion of required conditions: _____

SIC Chairperson: _____ Date: _____

SIC Secretary: _____ Date: _____

Principal (acknowledgment): _____ Date: _____

The Council shall keep the approved copy and minutes of adoption in the school's SIC records and make publicly accessible copies available as required by law.