

County Committee Questions and Answers

1. What is the County Committee on School District Organization?

The County Committee was created by the California State Legislature in 1949. It functions within the rules and regulations established by the Legislature and its own policies and procedures. It responds to petitioners, school districts governing boards, and may initiate studies on its own. Its duties and responsibilities pertain to school districts - kindergarten through community college.

The activities of the County Committee are coordinated by the County Superintendent of Schools and it interacts with the State Department of Education, County Board of Education, State Board of Education, and County Board of Supervisors, and other state agencies. Expenses and activities are funded from the County School Service Fund.

2. Who serves on the County Committee?

The County Committee consists of eleven members - two representatives from each supervisorial district and one member serving at-large. County Committee members are elected at an annual meeting of school trustee representatives. The term for office is four years.

3. What are the broad responsibilities of the County Committee?

The County Committee studies and makes recommendations in the areas of:

- the organization and reorganization of school districts.
- the transfer of territory between and/or among school districts.
- the number of trustees and the manner by which they are elected.

4. How often does the County Committee meet?

Public hearings related to matters before the County Committee are held throughout the county as required by law. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson or by a majority of the County Committee members. The meetings are subject to the provisions of the Brown Act.

5. How do items get the County Committee's agenda?

The County Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee serves as secretary to the County Committee. Agenda items are originated by or submitted to the County Committee. Official minutes of each County Committee meeting must be maintained and are available according to the rules and regulations of the Committee at the office of the County Superintendent of Schools.

6. What is school district reorganization?

The reorganization of school districts is one of the major responsibilities of the County Committee. An action to reorganize school districts can refer to any one of the following:

- transfer of territory between or among school districts
- school district unification or deunification (organizing into a K-12 range or separating a K-12 organization)

- formation of new districts of all types from territory of existing districts
- dissolution or lapsation of a school district
- annexation of all or part of one district to another district

7. What is the process for reorganization?

The process for reorganizing a school district may be initiated in the following ways:

- a citizen petition submitted to the County Committee
- a request from a school district governing board to the County Committee
- a recommendation from a member of the County Committee

Each initiation method has a different procedure, prescribed by law, which may include: studies of reorganization, public hearings, and voter approval. In each instance, public action is required of the County Committee to ensure public input to the process.

Any action taken by the County Committee may be appealed to the State Board of Education.

8. What is the process for proposing a transfer of territory?

An action to transfer territory from one school district to another is initiated by submitting a valid petition to the County Committee. The petition may be initiated by:

- at least 25 percent of the registered voters residing in the area proposed for transfer, or by 10 percent of the registered voters of a school district, in which case the County Committee must decide whether to fully consider the matter
- the owner of the property if it is uninhabited
- a majority of the members of the governing boards of each affected district

The Secretary to the County Committee assists petitioners in securing the appropriate documentation.

After the County Committee has studied the proposal and held hearings on the matter in each affected school district, it prepares a series of findings, a report, and makes a determination to approve or disapprove the proposal.

If the County Committee does not approve the proposal, the process ends unless an appeal is made to the State Board of Education. If the proposal is approved, an election is held in the territory selected by the County Committee. An election is not required if the territory is uninhabited or contains less than 10 percent of the assessed value of the district from which the transfer is being made, and the governing boards of all districts have approved the transfer.

9. What is the process for proposing a school unification action?

An action to unify a school district is initiated by submitting a valid petition to the County Committee. The petition may be initiated by:

- at least 25 percent of the registered voters residing in the area proposed for transfer
- 10 percent of the registered voters of a school district, in which case the County Committee must decide whether to fully consider the matter
- a majority of the members of the governing boards of each affected district

After the County Committee has studied the proposal and held hearings on the matter in each affected school district, it prepares a series of findings, a recommendation, and unification plan for submission to the State Board of Education.

The State Board of Education approves or denies the petition. If approved, the proposal goes to an election in territory selected by the State Board of Education. If the proposal passes at the election, the unification action is implemented. All school district unification proposals must go through the State Board of Education; the board cannot be passed.

10. What are the requirements for a petition?

Any citizen or school district that wants to register a petition to reorganize a school district must write a letter to the Secretary of the County Committee. All petitions submitted shall include a statement of what is proposed, the names of the school districts affected, the geographical area which would be affected with a map and legal description and the reason(s) for the petition. The number of signatures varies depending on the type of action proposed.

Proposed Action Required	Number of signatures
Unification and formation of a new district	15% of the of registered electors residing in the territory proposed to be recognized. E.C. Section 35700(a) 10% of the registered electors residing in the territory to be reorganized E.C. Section 35721(a)
Transfer of territory between or among districts	25% of the registered electors residing in the territory proposed to be transferred. If the territory is uninhabited, the owner may petition.
Trustee areas	5% or 50 (whichever is less) of the registered voters residing in a district with 2,500 or fewer registered voters; or 2% or 250 (whichever is less) in a district with 2,501 or more registered voters. These provisions do not apply in school districts governed by a board of education provided for in a city charter.

11. Can the County Committee be bypassed?

Any proposal to reorganize school districts must be considered by the County Committee for decision or recommendation. The County Committee is readily accessible through its Secretary.

12. Where is the specific authority for the County Committee?

Authorization for the County Committee and its actions can be found in the California Education Code Sections 4000, et. seq., and 35500 et. seq., and the California Administrative Code, Title 5.

13. Where can I get specific answers to question about the County Committee?

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