

## FACT SHEET – School Councils

School Councils provide a place where parents can raise and solve school-wide issues and contribute as partners in their children's education. An effective School Council communicates well with its stakeholders and establishes goals that reflect the interests, concerns and priorities of the parent community.

*Ministry of Education School Council Guidelines*, highlighted below, help the council function as an accountable body. The guidelines seem extensive at first; however they are not intended to overwhelm. Most of it is common sense and a source for reference. While some Councils operate more formally using *Robert's Rules of Order*, others are more casual following the basic principles of running meetings. The goal is to make everyone feel welcome, to draw on volunteer's strengths, and to have achievable goals and actions.

### Roles and Responsibilities

#### The school council shall . . .

- Be an advisory body, that makes recommendations to the principal of the school or the Board on any matter (Reg.612/20)
- Consult with parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council. (Reg.612/613)
- Develop By-laws that govern election procedures, filling vacancies and a conflict resolution process. (Reg.612/5.2)
- Keep minutes of meetings and keep financial records for a period of four years (Reg.612/16).
- Produce an annual written report of the council activities, including financial activities, to be submitted to the principal and the Board. (Reg. 612/24)
- Focus on improved learning for all students
- Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues
- Represent and communicate the views of the school community

### Membership

- The majority of school council members must be elected parents/guardians of pupils enrolled in the school, teachers, support staff, secondary school students (elementary where appropriate), appointed community representative(s), a representative from the Board.
- Employees who work at their child's school are not eligible for election as school council parent members in that school (Reg. 612/3.5, 4.2)
- Board employees who stand for school council election as parent members in their child's school (where they do not work), must disclose their employment with the board. (Reg. 612/3.5, 4.2)
- Board employees are not eligible to be chair or co-chair of any school council in that Board. (Reg. 612/8.3)
- A school trustee is not eligible to be a member of a school council. (Reg. 612/3.6)
- Sub-committees may include non-elected members of the school community and must include at least one parent member of the school council. (Reg. 612/13.2-3)
- Home and School Association, if such a group exists in the school and the principal/vice-principal. (Reg. 612/5.1-4)

### Positions Available on a School Council

- A chair, selected by the council from among the parent members on the council, who will chair meetings, establish a schedule, link with the principal and speak on behalf of the council. The council can also choose to elect a co-chair, vice-chair, secretary and/or treasurer.

- The role of chair is critical to the running of a successful school council and to ensure that meetings are productive. The chair facilitates discussions and democratic decision-making.
- The chair guides the process – they don't have to have all the great ideas, they just need to draw them out of others
- To run an effective meeting, the chair must do the following – create an agenda with the co-chair and Principal; keep to the agenda during the meeting; summarize and conclude discussions to help the secretary with the recording and ensure everyone understands the direction of the group

### **Terms for Council Members**

- Elected and appointed positions on the council are normally two years. However, school councils can decide to have some one-year terms. Ideally, the term of office for parents would be staggered with half the members elected each year. Elected and appointed members can seek additional terms.

### **What is the Responsibility of a Council Member?**

- Attend and contribute regularly at all school council meetings
- Act as a link between the school council and the community
- Participate in information and training
- Fulfill their duties
- Follow the operating rules/guidelines as agreed upon by the council including the guidelines for resolving differences of opinion
- Encourage others within the school community to participate in the activities of the council
- Communicate with various communities in the school and work towards removing any barriers to the participation of all members of the school community

### **Meetings**

- The school council shall meet at least four times during the school year to discuss and decide on matters that it has the authority to consider. (Reg. 612/12.1)
- A majority of parents must be present to have a duly constituted meeting of the school council (quorum). (Reg.612/12.3)
- A newly elected school council shall meet within 35 days of the school year on a date set by the principal. (Reg. 612/12.2)
- Each elected member of the school council is entitled to one vote. Principals are not eligible to vote. (Reg. 612/14.2-3)
- All school council meetings shall be open to the public. (Reg. 612/12.4)

### **What is the Council Election Process?**

#### **Elections Committee**

- Each school may form an Elections Planning Committee chaired by the principal and with representation from parents, teaching staff, support staff, and in secondary schools, students. This committee is responsible for planning and holding elections for parents, teachers and support staff representatives. The planning committee's roles include:
  - choosing a time and location for the election
  - preparing election information
  - distributing election notices to the school community
  - developing acceptable campaign procedures

#### **Election procedures**

##### ***Principal Role***

- The principal shall publicize the Election Day proceedings at least fourteen days prior to the election on the behalf of the council
- Information about candidates shall be made available to the school community at least one week before the election.
- The principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the ballot position for each candidate.
- The principal shall supervise the election day proceedings

- Voting is done by secret ballot
- Ballots shall be counted by the principal in the presence of at least two parents who are not election candidates

#### *Election of Parent/Guardian Representatives*

- Parents/guardians of a student enrolled in the school can vote in a school election and run as a parent representative.
- Parents can nominate themselves by completing the nomination ballot and returning it to the school.
- Candidates should be prepared to summarize their reasons for running to represent the school community
- Parents/Guardians must be present at the school on the election day(s) during the preset hours for voting (to include both daytime and evening hours)
- Parents/Guardians can cast one vote for each candidate.
- If there is a tie for the final position, the winner will be determined by lot.
- If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, the candidates will be acclaimed.
- If all elected positions are not filled, the council can appoint additional people or choose to operate with vacancies.
- Appointments are by majority vote.
- The school council chair will be elected within 30 days of the parent representative elections.

#### *Election of Staff Representative*

- The principal will work with the elections committee to make arrangements for both teacher and support staff representatives to be elected. Anyone assigned to the school (full or part-time) can be a candidate.

#### *Elections of Student Representative*

- The principal will work with the elections committee to make arrangements to decide if there will be a student representative on the committee. In secondary schools, any student registered can be a candidate.

#### *Appointment of Community Representative(s)*

- All appointments of community representatives to the school council are to be by majority vote at a meeting of the school council.

To read the complete guidelines, please click on [School Councils - A Guide for Members](#)