

# Central Toronto Academy Council Constitution, By-Laws & Practices

*Under existing Ministry of Ontario legislation regulations 612/00, each school is required to establish and maintain a school council of parents, staff and the principal. This document outlines the by-laws and practices which govern the operations, activities and responsibilities of Central Toronto Academy's School Council.*

## Mission Statement/Objectives

Central Toronto Academy's School Council is a voluntary group of parents, guardians and school staff who are committed to:

- supporting and enhancing student learning through the cooperative efforts of all people involved at CTA
- supporting the learning environment by working with administration on issues of concern for the school community; and
- promoting and encouraging parental/guardian involvement.

## Section #1 - School Council Membership and Elections

### Eligibility to Partake

- The majority of school council members must be parents/guardians of pupils enrolled in the school. (Reg. 612/4.1)
- 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)

### BY-LAW #1: SCHOOL COUNCIL COMPOSITION

Eligible parents/guardians are invited to campaign for School Council Representative positions.

The *Council Representatives* for the school year shall be composed of The Executive Committee (which also includes the principal) and the General Council. *Council Representatives* will be no less than 3 and no more than 12 members including:

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES				
The Executive Committee will consist of:			General Council may include:	
1	Principal and/or Vice-Principal		1	Teacher
1	Chair		1	Non-teaching Support staff
1	Co-Chair (if one exists)		1	Student representative (optional – see below)
1	Secretary		1	Past Chair (if available)
1	Treasurer			Committee leads (see below)
1	Health, Wellness and Safe School Parent Representative			

**PRACTICE: The positions above shall be filled by elected/appointed members. It is expected that parent members will make up the majority of these positions.**

**PRACTICE: Student representative position – This position on the Council may be fulfilled by co-representatives with a maximum of two students.**

### ***Committees***

- School Council may establish committees. All committees are accountable to the School Council and must follow directions from the School Council.
- Committee members are not automatically members of School Council. However, each committee must have one parent volunteer who also sits on the School Council as the committee lead. This ensures the ties between School Council and the committees remains strong.
- All committees are accountable to School Council and are expected to secure approval and provide regular updates on their activities.

All Council Representatives are expected to:

- regularly attend and participate in council meetings
- maintain a school-wide perspective and act in the best interests of the school and students
- support student success and the school's success plan
- encourage participation of parents and representatives from all groups in the school community
- act as a link between the school council and the community
- support and promote the decisions reached by Council
- Adhere to Code of Ethics
- Disclose any Conflicts of Interest

Additional details on the roles and responsibilities of School Council members can be found in Appendix A.

### **BY-LAW #2: ELECTIONS**

#### ***Election process for parent members of Council Representatives***

- It is the principal's responsibility to ensure school council elections occur within the first 30 days of the school year.
- At least 14 days before the date of the election, the principal shall provide written notice of the date, time and location of the election to the parents and guardians of all students enrolled in the school.
- A person is qualified to be a representative of school council if he/she is an eligible parent or guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school.
- Members are elected to the positions of Council Representative by nomination followed by a vote.
- Parents may nominate themselves or other parents for election.
- Candidates may be asked to summarize their reasons for running for Council Representative.
- If the number of candidates is less than, or equal to, the number of positions available, the candidates will be acclaimed.
- All eligible voters may cast one vote for each of the candidate positions.
- A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members if he/she is an eligible parent or guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school (see membership section)
- The principal/vice-principal are non-voting members.
- Voters must be present during the election.

If there is a tie for a position on council, the vote will be decided by drawing lots. Appeals related to the Council Representative elections shall be resolved by the principal and past chair(s) of the immediately outgoing council (if available).

#### ***Election of non-parent members of Council Representatives***

The principal, in consultation with the incoming chair(s), will make arrangements for the election of all non-parent members of the Council Representatives.

**PRACTICE: All individuals standing for election shall be notified of the results before the results are released to the school community.**

### ***Vacancies***

Vacancies of Council Representative positions occur when:

- positions on the Executive Committee or General Council have not been filled after an election
- when a member resigns
- when a member is, otherwise, unable to fulfill his/her duties and responsibilities

To fill a vacancy, Council Representatives can elect or appoint a current/new parent member or continue to operate with a vacancy as long as there is a quorum and the majority of Council Representatives are parents.

A member who fails to fulfill his/her responsibilities may, after the involvement of a facilitator, be removed by a two-thirds vote of the school council.

### **Section #2: School Council Areas of Responsibility**

School Council is able to make recommendations to the principal and school board on any matter. However, they must represent the general views of the school community and the best interests of all students in the school. School council may be asked to provide advice to the principal or school board trustees on decisions that include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- determining the school activity calendar for the Board calendar year
- the school code of behaviour and dress codes
- the school program goals, priorities and curriculum delivery
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and boards assessment programs
- school budget priorities
- allocation of funding for school councils
- strategies for communication and reporting between the school and the community
- selection criteria and placement of principals and vice-principals
- extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreation and nutritional programs
- fundraising policies
- conflict resolution policies
- reimbursement of expenses for school council members
- community use of school facilities
- local coordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation and review of Board policies at the local level
- the establishment or amendment of Board policies and guidelines that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
- development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
- board action plans for improvement based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of students and the communication of those plans to the public
- development of the school profile

## **Section #3: School Council Procedures**

### **Code of Ethics**

- The School Council shall operate in a non-judgmental manner, employing constructive discussions and reaching decisions through consensus.
- Council members shall practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth.

See Appendix B for a detailed, though not exclusive, list of other Code of Ethics items.

### **Meetings**

- A minimum of four meetings must be held during the school year.
- All meetings are called at the discretion of the chair and scheduled on a date in consultation with the principal.
- All school council meetings are open to the school community and will be advertised by the School Council and the school principal.
- Meetings will be held on-site at the school or virtually, as required.
- Every council meeting agenda should dedicate time at the start of the meeting for a brief discussion of any open business/action items from the previous meeting.\*
- Every council meeting agenda should dedicate time at the start of the meeting for approval of the previous meeting's minutes.\*
- Every council meeting agenda should dedicate time to a discussion of new business.\*
- Chair will send an email request for agenda items to each Council Representative 7 days prior to a scheduled school council meeting with a closing of 72 hours prior to meeting for any additions.

**\*PRACTICE: The chair, who is conducting the meeting, can put forth a motion to re-order agenda items, if need be.**

### **BY-LAW #3: MEETING MINUTES**

- Minutes must be taken at all council meetings.
- Within 7 business days post-meeting, a *draft* copy of meeting minutes will be distributed to school council meeting attendees for accuracy and completeness. Meeting attendees must reply to Council secretary within 7 business days with any comments or corrections.
- Once secretary incorporates comments/corrections into minutes, minutes move from being "draft" copy to a "working copy" and made available to all meeting attendees and Council Representatives (whether in attendance of the meeting not).
- Minutes will be considered *final* once ratified at the next School Council meeting.
- Once final, the secretary will provide the school office with a copy of the meeting minutes.
- Meeting minutes to be posted on the school council's webpage on the school's website.

### **Financial records**

Financial statements shall document any expenses or fundraising revenue for the previous year, for the accounting period of September 1 to August 31 inclusive, and shall be reconciled with the school budget secretary.

The financial statements shall include:

- the opening balance (cash on hand at the beginning of the year)
- revenue collected during the year
- expenses incurred during the year
- the closing balance (cash on hand at the end of the year)

### **Annual report**

No later than September 30<sup>th</sup> of each school year, the prior chair of the school council shall submit an annual report (for previous year), including the annual financial statement, to the principal.

The annual report should include:

- a list of members
- a summary of meeting dates
- a summary of council's activities from September 1 to August 31 inclusive
- a report of any fundraising activities
- other information which council feels is appropriate

A copy of financial transaction records and annual reports must be made available in the school office for the parents and guardians of enrolled students. These documents should be kept on file at the school for a minimum of four years.

#### **Section #4: Decision-Making**

##### **BY-LAW #4: VOTING**

###### ***Decision-making process: Consensus***

Apart from the Principal and Vice-Principal who do not vote, each eligible Council Representative is entitled to one vote.

Note: Though two student representatives may fill this position on Council, this position is only allotted one vote.

School Council will make every effort to arrive at a consensus for all decisions. Consensus is reached when all or most of the Council Representatives can accept or support the idea, concept or course of action being proposed.

Any participant at the School Council meeting may bring a motion with no seconder required. A motion is approved if a majority of the Council Representatives present at the meeting support it.

###### ***Decision-making process: Cannot reach Consensus***

- Where consensus cannot be reached by Council Representatives, issues may be resolved through a formal vote.
- If a vote is necessary, all Council Representatives (except principal/vice-principal) are entitled to one vote. Again, though there may be co-student representatives filling in the position, this position is only entitled to one vote.
- Parent members must make up the majority of the Council Representatives present.
- A majority vote (50%+1) of those members present is required for approval.
- A Council Representative may abstain from voting on any motion.

##### **BY-LAW #5: QUORUM**

A quorum exists when:

- the majority of the Council Representatives are present at the meeting; and
- a majority of the Council Representatives who are present at the meeting are parent members.

A quorum is necessary to pass any motions. Without a quorum, if the majority of parents would like the meeting to proceed without a quorum, the council may continue to discuss other topics.

##### **BY-LAW #6: TIME-PRESSED DECISIONS**

Items requiring immediate decisions, prior to the next school council meeting, may be made by Council Representatives (with a quorum of 3 *Council Representatives* including 1 chair) and shall be made by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, then the majority (50%+1) rule may be applied.

At least twenty-four-hour notice shall be given for such meetings and they will be publicized to all Council Representatives. It is expected that parent members will make up the majority of those in attendance.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

A meeting participant shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or their business affiliations could directly or indirectly benefit from the decisions of council.

A meeting participant who identifies a conflict of interest must declare it before any discussion of the matter begins. The member must:

- publicly state the conflict of interest, explain the general nature of the interest and have the declaration recorded in the minutes
- not vote on the matter under discussion
- leave the room when council is discussing the matter and have this fact recorded in the minutes
- not discuss the matter with members or attempt to influence the vote

A meeting participant shall not accept favours or economic benefit from any individuals, organizations or entities known to be seeking business contracts from the school.

See Appendix C for a detailed, though not exclusive, list of other conflict of interest items.

### ***Handling Disruptive Behaviour***

- If a meeting participant becomes disruptive during a meeting and is not responsive to the call for order, the chair may ask for the removal of the disruptive individual(s). The reasons for the removal should be documented in the minutes.
- Removing a participant from a council meeting does not prevent that member from participating in future council meetings.

### ***Dispute Resolution***

Occasionally, a dispute may develop among School Council participants. It is expected these individuals and the principal will make every effort to resolve the dispute themselves.

### ***Resolving Disputes Internally***

- School Council participants, led by the chair, will try to resolve all disputes as a group.
- At all times, participants should adhere to the Code of Ethics outlined in Appendix B.
- The chair may request disputing individuals meet privately to find a mutually acceptable solution to the issue.

### ***Resolving Disputes through Mediation***

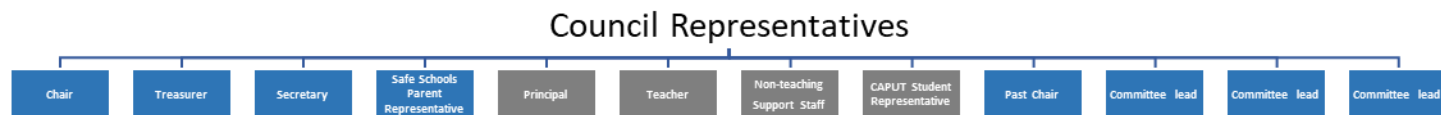
- If it is apparent that a dispute cannot be resolved internally, the chair may ask for a mediator
- The mediator shall assist the individuals to find a resolution in the best interests of the school and students.
- The resolution shall be signed and respected by all individuals involved in the dispute.

### ***Procedure for amendments to Constitution, By-Laws and Practices***

The Central Toronto Academy Council Constitution, By-laws and Practices may be amended during any regular School Council meeting following the same decision guidelines that apply to other decisions.

# Appendix A – Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

---



## **Chair**

- establish and communicate a school council meeting schedule for the year (dates set in consultation with the principal)
- prepare the agenda and chair all council meetings
- have general supervision of the operations of the council
- facilitate collaborative decision-making
- ensure that school council members are aware of their responsibility to behave ethically and responsibly at all times, to adhere to the council’s code of ethics and to disclose conflicts of interest, where they exist
- participate, as an ex-officio member, of all committees established by school council
- ensure regular communication occurs between the council and the school community
- be responsible for making public statements to the school community on behalf of the school council
- review/approve the school council reports and any other financial records of school council
- communicate regularly with the school principal and involve him/her in the planning of all school council activities and/or initiatives that will involve or impact on the school staff or students
- ensure that there is consultation between the school community and the principal regarding the distribution of school council funds
- prepare an annual report outlining school council activities from September 1 to August 31, inclusive.

## **Secretary**

- ensure that full and accurate minutes of the council meetings are recorded, maintained, reported and available at each meeting
- verify and record all consensus or voted decisions of the council
- ensure that the minutes of the council meetings are made available in the school office for parents and guardians of the students enrolled at the school and have been posted on school council’s webpage on school’s website (see By-Law #3)

## **Treasurer**

- manage all funds raised by the council
- work in partnership with the school’s budget secretary regarding fund collection and payments from School Council funds
- maintain financial records for council, including accurate documentation for receipts and disbursements funds
- prepare School Council financial reports including the annual financial statement ensuring that financial transactions are accurately recorded and updated
- give a financial report at regular council meetings when financial activities warrant it

***Health, Wellness and Safe Schools Parent Representative***

- participates on the Health, Wellness and Safe Schools committee with other school stakeholders in an effort to provide opportunities or education that will increase student safety in all domains – mental, physical and emotional spheres
- share School Council initiatives/concerns with the committee that may impact committee activities
- liaise with desired community service providers to create advantageous partnerships
- update council on committee activities

***Committee Lead***

- Committee members are not automatically members of School Council. However, each committee must have one parent volunteer who also sits on the School Council as the committee lead. This ensures the ties between School Council and the committees remains strong.
- Committee lead must liaise with other committee members and provide regular updates to council on their committee's activities.



## Appendix B - Code of Ethics

---

- The school council shall operate in a non-judgmental manner, employing constructive discussions and reaching decisions through consensus.
- Council members shall become familiar and act in accordance with Board and school policies and operating practices.
- Council members shall focus on school-wide issues and shall consider the best interests of the school and all students.
- Council members shall practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth.
- Council members shall recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of individual students and board employees.
- Council members shall treat all other members with respect and shall allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.
- Council meetings are to remain free of discussion about individual parents, students, board employees, trustees or other council members.
- Council members shall respect the confidential nature of some school business, shall accept the limitations this may place on the operation of the council and shall not disclose confidential information.
- Council members shall accept accountability for decisions.
- Council members shall identify all council agenda items and/or issues with which they have a possible conflict of interest.
- Council members shall not accept any payment or benefit financially through involvement in school council.
- Council Members shall refrain from the following:
  - Using any form of social media to speak negatively about any member of the council representative, the school council as a whole or school council initiatives.
  - Using any form of social media to represent Council in any manner other than those sanctioned by the Council or the Principal.
  - Using the School Council or its brand to promote their personal initiatives.

## Appendix C - Conflicts of Interest

---

A conflict of interest for a school council member involves situations in which the member's private interests may be incompatible or in conflict with his/her school council responsibilities.

A conflict of interest may be:

- **actual** – a private interest may directly or indirectly influence the exercise of the member's duties and responsibilities
- **perceived** – a reasonably well-informed person could believe that a member was in conflict of interest, even if that conflict of interest did not exist
- **potential** – a private interest could influence the exercise of the member's duties and responsibilities

A council member shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or their business affiliations could directly or indirectly benefit from the decisions of council.

A council member who identifies a conflict of interest must declare it before any discussion of the matter begins. The member must:

- publicly state the conflict of interest, explain the general nature of the interest and have the declaration recorded in the minutes
- not vote on the matter under discussion
- leave the room when council is discussing the matter and have this fact recorded in the minutes
- not discuss the matter with members or attempt to influence the vote

A council member shall not accept favours or economic benefit from any individuals, organizations or entities known to be seeking business contracts from the school.