



YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Policy and Procedure #672.0, Student Leadership and Student Voice

Executive Summary

The Student Leadership and Student Voice policy and procedure recognizes and supports student leadership and student voice as resonant forces in establishing a thriving learning environment for each learner in the Board.

What has changed?

Major changes to the document: Clarifying policy definitions, such as the definition of student councils, and including principles of equity.

Reason for review: Due for second review.

Who is affected by these changes and what is the impact on current practice? All stakeholder groups with responsibilities.

Implementation timelines: Immediate.

Lead Superintendent(s)/Subject Matter Experts: Superintendent of Education, Leadership Development and Engagement.

Stakeholder Groups with Responsibilities under this Policy and Procedure

- Board of Trustees
- Student Trustees
- Director of Education
- Superintendent of Education, Leadership Development and Engagement
- Elementary and Secondary Principals
- Student Councils or Alternative Student Leadership Group Staff Advisors
- York Region Presidents' Council
- York Region Presidents' Council Advisors
- Student Councils and Alternative Student Leadership Group Members/Representatives
- Students
- Trustee Services

Relationship to Board Priorities

This policy and procedure supports the Board's commitment to promoting student achievement and well-being, the stewardship of Board resources and the delivery of effective and sustainable education programs by engaging students as partners in their learning and public education and enhancing confidence in public education.

Timelines and Next Steps

This policy was scheduled for second review at the April 4, 2023 Policy and By-Law Standing Committee meeting.

It is the expectation of the York Region District School Board that all employees, students and persons invited to or visiting Board property, or partaking/volunteering in Board or school-sponsored events and activities, will respect the policies and procedures of the Board.



Board Policy #672.0, Student Leadership and Student Voice

1. Policy Statement

The York Region District School Board recognizes that student leadership and student engagement are resonant forces in establishing a thriving learning environment for each learner in the Board. The Board is committed to ensuring that student voice effectively represents the diverse student body, including the silent voices of marginalized students, and is heard and considered in decision-making at all levels.

2. Application

Students in the York Region District School Board are encouraged to advocate for the needs of their peers and engage in the political process through student-led learning opportunities in schools.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- a) recognizing the importance of promoting a diversity of student leadership and voice throughout the Board that provides equity of access and opportunity for a diverse student population
- b) being aware of and recognizing the work of student councils and alternative student leadership groups in their schools;
- c) acknowledging and taking into consideration suggestions and concerns made by student councils, alternative student leadership groups and the York Region Presidents' Council (YRPC) through the student trustees;
- d) taking advantage of opportunities to attend meetings of the YRPC and/or meeting with student councils and/or alternative student leadership groups;
- e) reviewing the Student Leadership and Student Voice policy in accordance with the priorities in the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) and the approved policy review cycle; and
- f) understanding and communicating with members of the community about the Student Leadership and Student Voice policy and procedures, as required.

3.2 The Student Trustees are responsible for:

- a) giving the student population a meaningful voice in Board deliberations and acting as a conduit for the flow of information and ideas between trustees, staff members and the student body;
- b) being accessible to students, student council and alternative student leadership group members from across the Board to listen to their concerns and suggestions;
- c) attending all meetings of the(YRPC);
- d) consulting with students on matters being considered by the Board;

- e) maintaining open lines of communication at all times between themselves and students to discuss issues and ideas;
- f) maintaining the YRPC website, in conjunction with Trustee Services staff;
- g) maintaining open lines of communication at all times between themselves and students to discuss issues and ideas;
- h) adhering to Board [Policy #668.0, Caring and Safe Schools](#) and [Procedure #668.7 Student Code of Conduct](#); and
- i) understand and adhere to the responsibilities under the [Student Trustees](#) policy.

3.3 The Director of Education is responsible for:

- a) allocating resources and staff to implement and operationalize the Student Leadership and Student Voice policy and procedures;
- b) recognizing and promoting the importance of diverse student voice throughout the Board; and
- c) supporting the Student Trustees to discuss student matters at a system level.

4. Definitions

4.1 Alternative Student Leadership Group (Elementary and Secondary)

A representative body of students (e.g. Gender & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs), Social Justice, affinity, Mental health and Well-being), that actively amplifies student voice and is consulted on issues that are related to students. These groups also work to improve the school community and act as a link between school administration and the students.

4.2 Student Councils

Democratically-elected student-led groups (also known as student activity council, student senate, student government etc.) that represent student voice, work to improve school spirit and enhance school community through various school and community initiatives and events.

4.3 York Region Presidents' Council

The official secondary school student senate of the York Region District School Board, with the mission of promoting and enhancing communication and cooperation, inspiring and fostering leadership, and collecting the voice of secondary school students.

5. Contact

Director's Office
Leadership Development

6. History

Approved: 2011
Working Document: February 2015, March 2018

Revised: November 2015, March 2023



Board Procedure #672.1, Student Leadership and Student Voice

1. Procedure Statement

This procedure outlines the collaborative process by which student leadership and student voice will be encouraged, facilitated and recognized at all levels in the Board and explains the roles of staff and students in the York Region District School Board with respect to student leadership, student voice and student involvement.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The Director of Education shall:

- a) appoint one senior staff member to support York Region Presidents' Council (YRPC) and other student leadership matters at a system level.

2.2 The senior staff member identified to support the York Region Presidents' Council and other student leadership shall:

- a) ensure formal and informal opportunities for student leadership and student voice are available at the elementary and secondary school level (i.e., student councils and alternative student leadership groups like GSAs, Social Justice, Mental Health and Well-being club, policy review, etc.)

2.2.1 Support Student Trustees:

- a) collaborate with Trustee Services, Corporate Communications and YRPC to support the annual Student Trustee Election process; and
- b) meet bi-monthly with the Student Trustees, Board Vice-Chair and YRPC Principal Advisor.

2.2.2 Support the implementation of the York Region Presidents' Council at the Board level

- a) appoint one secondary principal and four secondary vice-principals, one from each Community Education Centre (CEC), to act as advisors for the YRPC;
- b) promote the activities of YRPC among students, parents/guardians/families, staff and trustees; and
- c) increase opportunities for YRPC to engage with students and staff to collect and express diverse student voice.

2.3 Secondary administrators appointed as advisors to the York Region Presidents' Council shall:

- a) provide guidance to school administrators regarding student leadership and student voice opportunities where applicable;
- b) support Student Trustees;
 - collaborate with Trustee Services and Corporate Communications to support the annual Student Trustee election process, and
 - Principal Advisor to attend the bi-monthly Student Trustee check in meetings with the Board Vice-Chair and senior staff member appointed to support YRPC;
- c) support YRPC;
 - collaborate with Corporate Communications to support the annual election of Student Executive to lead YRPC,
 - support YRPC student executive with the planning, implementation and debriefing for the General Assembly (GA), Student Outreach Meetings (SOM) and Presidents' Council,
 - plan and present YRPC updates during regular Secondary Vice-Principal/Principal and CEC Network meetings to engage student leadership and student voice, and
 - collaborate with Trustee Services to engage the YRPC Executive in an annual review of the YRPC Constitution.

2.4 Trustee Services shall:

- a) support the annual Student Trustee Election and onboarding process;
- b) provide appropriate guidance and assistance to Student Trustees in their role as student leaders; and
- c) support in the annual review YRPC constitution.

2.5 Corporate Communications shall:

- a) support communication related to annual Student Trustee Election process;
- b) support communication related to YRPC Executive Election process and other matters (e.g., communication of GA to students and staff);
- c) facilitate media training for student trustees and YRPC executives; and
- d) assist Student Trustees with the review and posting of information on the Student Trustee and YRPC websites.

2.6 Elementary principals shall:

- a) where there is a desire for students to have a student council, ensure it is democratically selected and representative of the student body;
- b) raise awareness among students of the opportunity to form alternative student leadership groups as needs arise;
- c) ensure that there is, at minimum, one staff member who is able to act in an advisory role on the student council or alternative elementary student leadership group;

- d) ensure that formal and informal leadership opportunities are made available for all students by intentionally engaging historically marginalized and underrepresented youth; and
- e) take into consideration the perspective of student council and alternative student leadership group representatives on matters affecting the general student body.

2.7 Secondary principals shall:

- a) ensure formal and informal student leadership and student voice opportunities are made available for all students by intentionally encouraging historically marginalized and underrepresented youth to participate in Board, school and student-led events (i.e., promoting YRPC GAs, policy review etc. during announcements, on social media, and in school newsletters/websites);
- b) establish a democratically-elected student council to represent the student body;
- c) raise awareness among students of the opportunity to form alternative student leadership groups as needs arise;
- d) appoint, at minimum, one staff member to act in an advisory role on student council;
- e) request input from and consult with members of student council and alternative student leadership groups, if applicable, on matters relating to specific issues and policies that affect the general student body within their school;
- f) consider and approve, as appropriate, student council and alternative student leadership group's proposals for student events and initiatives;
- g) notify the YRPC of their schools' president(s), vice-president(s), third student representative, and staff advisor(s) within 30 days of their election;
- h) share YRPC communications with students;
- i) determine an appropriate student council budget in consultation with student council members, provide student councils with a physical location to meet and plan initiatives, such as a student council office or designated classroom; and
- j) ensure that student leadership events aim to be inclusive of all students.

2.8 Student Council or Alternative Student Leadership Group Staff Advisors shall:

- a) monitor the progress of members of the student council and alternative elementary student leadership group to ensure they continue to operate in a manner that is inclusive and anti-oppressive in practice;
- b) work collaboratively with student leaders to identify ways to actively seek diverse student voices and engage students toward increased student success well-being and engagement; and
- c) support student council and alternative student leadership group events and endeavours.

2.9 The York Region Presidents' Council (YRPC) shall:

- a) hold monthly general assembly meetings;
- b) provide organized leadership opportunities, as appropriate;
- c) support the elections for Student Trustees annually;
- d) conduct YRPC elections for executive positions annually;
- e) send notices of YRPC meetings and elections to secondary students and staff;

- f) make every effort to provide student councils and/or alternate student leadership members with the necessary support to thrive and flourish;
- g) enhance communication and foster cooperation between students, student councils, alternate student leaders groups and Student Trustees in the region;
- h) be inclusive of all secondary schools in the York Region District School Board;
- i) provide a forum for secondary students to meet and voice their concerns and share their opinions; and
- j) give reasonable notice to students of meeting dates, event dates, student trustee elections and YRPC executive elections.

2.10 Student Council and Alternate Student Leadership Members/Representatives shall:

- a) identify ways to gather and amplify diverse student voices;
- b) schedule regular student council and/or student leadership group meetings;
- c) provide input on student related matters, when requested;
- d) bring student issues to the attention of administrators;
- e) organize both spirit and educational events that are inclusive of the whole student body with the cooperation of staff supervisors;
- f) liaise with Student Trustees, as appropriate, on issues pertaining to the student body;
- g) actively collaborate with school staff members, students, parents/guardians/families and trustees;
- h) work proactively with the school administration, when appropriate, to resolve issues related to the interests of the student body;
- i) work to improve school spirit in the learning environment;
- j) meet and share information about student-related matters; and
- k) seek out diverse student voices in order to represent the student body and actively voice student concerns to the principal on school-related issues.

2.11 Student Council members shall:

- a) coordinate student-led events to ensure they do not conflict with each other in principle or in scheduling;
- b) conduct democratic elections for student council positions provided they are not running for election;
- c) serve as main contact on matters related to the student body;
- d) create a forum for alternative student leadership groups, clubs and councils to meet and share information about student related matters; and
- e) develop and maintain a constitution defining mandate, responsibility and positions.

2.12 Students shall:

- a) be given the chance to lead and participate in school clubs and activities at their leisure;
- b) strive to support the health and well-being of the student community;
- c) be aware of the student council or alternative elementary student leadership group activities within their school;
- d) bring to the attention of their student leaders any issues or suggestions that affect the student community; and

- e) participate, if desired, in student council, alternative student leadership group and other leadership opportunities in a respectful and ethical manner.

3. Contact

Director's Office
Leadership Development

4. History

Drafted: March 2018
Revised: March 2023



Board Procedure #672.2, Political Clubs in Secondary Schools

1. Procedure Statement

The York Region District School Board recognizes the educational value of student participation in the Canadian political process through learning opportunities in schools. The procedure outlines the process for operating political clubs in secondary schools.

2. Application

This procedure is not intended to sanction or approve of any particular political party or any political activity prohibited by law. Student engagement in the Canadian political process might include forming all-party parliamentary or partisan political clubs and/or organizing, for students, presentations by political candidates or elected representatives.

Political clubs may not fundraise in schools.

2.1 All-Candidate Meetings

All-candidate meetings provide opportunities for all individuals running for a particular office to present information and answer questions during the election campaign period.

All candidate meetings may be organized by political clubs provided all candidates running for a particular office have equal opportunity to participate. These meetings may be held in schools or other Board facilities during the school day with approval by the principal.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 The Director of Education shall:

- a) allocate staff and resources to support the implementation of the Political Clubs in Secondary Schools procedure.

3.2 Principals shall:

- a) ensure political clubs operate within the framework of the extra-curricular program;
- b) ensure a staff advisor oversees the political club;
- c) approve all-candidate meetings held during the school day; and
- d) ensure partisan advertising such as, but not limited to, political lawn signs and literature, is not posted or distributed on Board property.

3.3 Staff Advisors shall:

- a) oversee all activities and attend all meetings of political clubs;
- b) not schedule political club meetings during instructional time;

- c) ensure all school announcements of meetings, verbally or in print, are restricted to the time and place of meeting;
- d) ensure the cost of operating a partisan political club is funded by its members;
- e) oversee the organizing of all-candidate meetings in accordance with all requirements of the Political Clubs in Secondary Schools procedure and ensure;
 - approval by the principal,
 - sufficient notice is given to all candidates,
 - candidates that are unable to attend are aware they may send a designate,
 - candidates provide written confirmation of attendance or regrets at least one week before the meeting,
 - the meeting proceeds if two or more candidates for the same position are able to attend, and
 - the meeting is rescheduled or cancelled if only one candidate for the same position, where more than one is registered for a position, is able to attend;
- f) ensure partisan political clubs do not receive funds from any outside organization, political or otherwise; and
- g) not use their position to influence the political views of students.

3.4 Students shall:

- a) promote discussion of issues rather than personalities;
- b) share meeting agendas in an objective way that is not designed to influence the thinking or political position of students; and
- c) respect different political views.

3.5 Student Councils shall:

- a) consider requests by all-party parliamentary clubs for student council funds; and
- b) ensure the process to consider and provide funds to support the activities of political clubs in secondary schools is fair, equitable and non-partisan.

4. Contact

Director's Office
Leadership Development

5. History

Drafted: March, 2018
Formerly Policy and Procedure #660.0, Political Clubs in Secondary Schools
Revised: March 2022
Reviewed: March 2023