

SCHOOL COUNCIL HANDBOOK

Building family and community
partnerships in support of
student achievement and
well-being



Revised 2023



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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in being a school council member.

On the York Region District School Board's (YRDSB) [School councils](#) web page, we learn that school councils play an important and valued role with a school's improvement and with student achievement, well-being and mental health.

School councils work collaboratively to build partnerships that encourage involvement of all members of the school community to provide input into relevant Board and school-level decisions. Partners work together to co-create and implement actions that meet the needs of students in diverse communities. YRDSBMedia has posted a YouTube [video](#) for an overview of school councils.

York Region District School Board (YRDSB) appreciates the role that school councils play in consulting on its priorities, goals, strategies and plans as it continues to focus its resources on being responsive to the needs of students, families, and communities. The [YRDSB's Mission, Vision and Values](#), Trustee's [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) and [Director's Action Plan](#) help inform and guide work at the classroom, school, department, and system level. They provide direction for individual School Improvement Plans, and these areas of focus also motivate and inspire participation as a school council member. You can select [Board Plans](#) for more information. Select [About Us](#) for more background information on the YRDSB.

The York Region District School Board Leadership Framework

In the [YRDSB Leadership Framework for School Administrators](#) it outlines several Actions for Leaders that speak to the collaborative working model with school councils.

Some examples of these actions include:

- Leaders develop and maintain a positive working relationship with their school council and trustee while modeling and upholding good governance practices.
- Leaders seek out and co-create solutions with families and community members as part of developing collaborative cultures.
- Leaders are highly visible and accessible to family and community members to understand their unique strengths and needs.
- Leaders understand the many diverse communities in York Region to support families and schools in building strong relationships and achieving equitable outcomes.
- Leaders build awareness of the importance of families, guardians, communities, and Elders in creating shared solutions for student learning, achievement, and well-being.
- Leaders intentionally seek out and engage families, guardians, communities, and Elders as part of a review process to inform system policy and in the creation of local programs, processes, and practices.
- Leaders provide open and transparent communication to the public about the Board's roles, responsibilities, educational policies, programs, and services to build understanding.
- Leaders develop and implement the School Improvement Plan (SIP) with the engagement of families, guardians, communities, and Elders.

[The YRDSB's Parent, Family and Community Engagement Advisory Committee \(PEAC\)](#) is available as a resource to school councils to help boost parent/guardian/family involvement at your school and beyond. PEAC is an important advisory body comprised of volunteer parents/guardians/family members, the Director of Education, trustees and Board employees – all members who are dedicated to supporting and enhancing the involvement of parents/guardians/families within schools and across the Board. Where school councils focus on parent/guardian/family engagement and student success within the local school and community, PEAC participates at the Board level by providing information and advice to the Board on parent/guardian/family engagement, participating in policy review and collaborating to plan and facilitate the school council forums and the PEAC Regional Symposium.

This School Council Handbook takes a 'How to' approach to the role and responsibility of school councils as well as activities in which school councils engage. **Please see [Appendix A](#) for Frequently Asked Questions.** If you have questions or require clarification after reviewing this School Council Handbook, please contact the school principal.

The Ontario Ministry of Education [School Councils: A Guide for Members](#) as well as [Policy 612 School Councils](#), in the Ontario Education Act are resources to refer to in support of your work.

As you review this resource, all feedback is welcome at leadership.development.engagement@yrdsb.ca. Thank you!

Promoting Engagement in School Councils

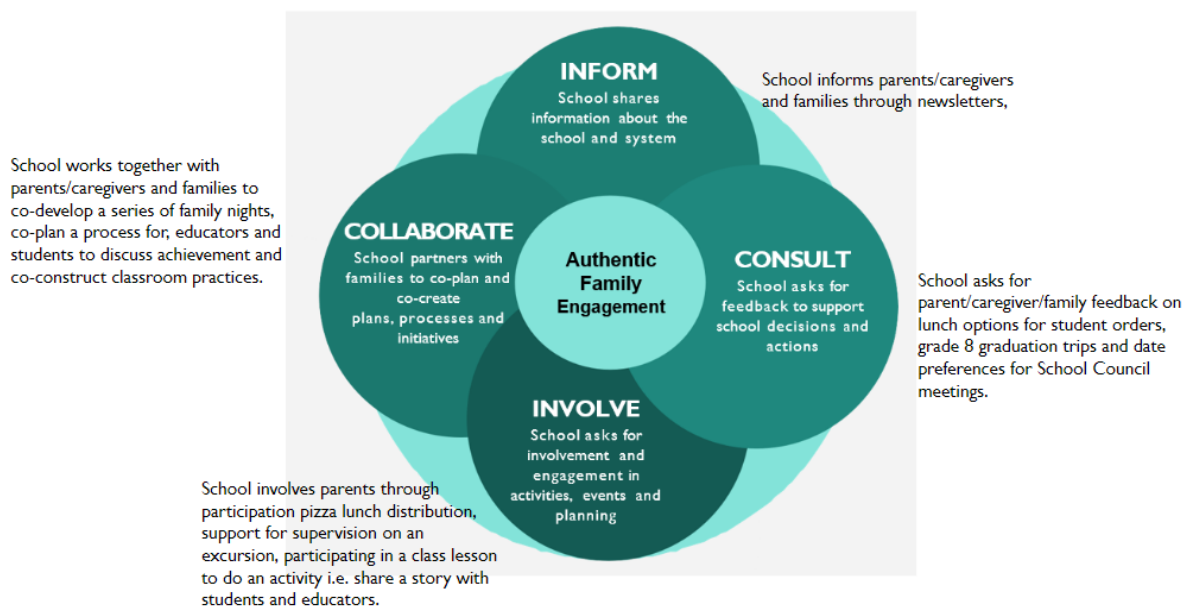
The YRDSB [Policy and Procedure #262.0, School Councils](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities for the development and operation of school councils. During its latest review, Policy and Procedure #262.0, school councils underwent a consultation process that invited feedback from many groups, including community partners.

Themes emerging from this input that has been incorporated into the policy include:

- Equitable access to participating on school councils for all communities;
- The creation of a safe space to identify and respond to needs;
- Active engagement of a diverse representation of community members;
- The need to build greater understanding within the community about the role that councils play;
- Acknowledgement of both well-being and mental health;
- The addition of language that is inclusive of all families;
- The need to determine the impact of school council activities have on school improvement; and
- The requirement that staff at all levels be responsive to conflict so all parties have a role in solutioning.

Moving from informing parents/guardians/families to consulting, involving and collaborating requires building trusting relationships, opening doors and listening to all partners. When parents/guardians/families see the impact they can make by being involved in school council membership will grow. Authentic family engagement means that schools need to work together in collaboration to co-develop and co-plan for student success

Authentic Family Engagement



School Councils

Composition of School Councils

School councils are advisory bodies which may make recommendations to the school principal or to the Board on matters as stated in all applicable Board policies and procedures. School councils are comprised of:

a) parents/guardians/families

- constitute the majority of members;
- must have a child(ren) enrolled at that school;
- cannot be employed at the school;
- can work for the Board, but must they inform the school community prior to the election; and
- the number will be six, unless otherwise stated in the constitution.

b) students

- named by the student council in secondary schools; and
- appointed by the school principal after consulting with the school council, where applicable, in elementary schools.

c) community representative

- is appointed by school council members;
- cannot be employed at the school as a member of a bargaining unit, an administrator or a manager; and
- can be employed as a member of a bargaining unit, an administrator or a manager elsewhere in the Board, but must inform other members of the council of this before the appointment.

d) school principal;

- If unable to attend a meeting, they/ he/she may ask the vice-principal to attend.

e) teaching staff member;

- employed at the school; and
- elected by teachers employed at the school.

f) support staff member

- employed at the school; and
- elected by support staff members employed at the school.

Meeting Requirements

- At least four meetings that are open and accessible to the public.
- The first meeting must be held within the first thirty-five days of the school year.
- Agendas should be communicated to members of the school community and made available to members of the public within a reasonable amount of time.
- A majority of parent/guardian/family members must be present in order for decisions to be made.
- All activities must be in compliance with Board policies and procedures.

School Council Membership

- Elections must be held during the first (30) thirty calendar days of each school year.
- Public notice must be given 14 fourteen days before the election, specifying the date, time and location.
- Members hold office from the date they are elected or appointed, or the date of the first school council meeting after the election is held; and hold office until the first meeting of the school council after elections are held in the next school year.
- Members may be re-elected or re-appointed unless otherwise specified in the school council constitution and/or by- laws.

Officers

- Each council must have a chair/co-chairs.
- Candidates for the position of chair/co-chair must be parent/guardian/family members and not employed by the Board.
- Council members elect the executive positions. Elected executive positions must be outlined in the school council constitution and/or by-laws and may consist of any number of the following: treasurer, minute taker, fundraising committee chair, [Active School Travel](#) committee chair, as examples.

Vacancies

- Vacant positions do not prevent the school council from exercising its authority.
- Positions may be filled in accordance with the school council constitution and/or by-laws.

Voting

When a consensus cannot be reached and voting is necessary, or on committees of the school council on which the member sits:

- each parent(s)/guardian(s)/family(s) member is entitled to one vote;
- the school principal is not entitled to vote;
- staff members are entitled to one collective vote; and
- community representatives are entitled to one collective vote, regardless of the number of community representatives.

Remuneration

- A person cannot receive any remuneration for serving on school council.
- Reimbursement for expenses incurred as members or officers of the school council will be done in accordance with relevant Board policies and procedures.

Best Practice: in order to ensure equity, all parent/guardian/family members should be eligible for executive positions regardless of previous experience. It is recommended that the section in the school council constitution and/or by-laws regarding the election of officers be inclusive of all parent/guardian/family members.

Roles and Responsibilities

[Policy and Procedure #262.0, School Councils](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities for the development of school councils. This policy and procedure identifies several roles that have responsibilities associated with school councils. Included in the handbook are details of the school principal and school council roles.

School Principals are responsible for:

School Council Equitable and Inclusive Representation and Engagement:

- ensuring that a school council is established that represents the school community and promotes improved student learning, achievement and well-being and mental health through the development of equitable and inclusive school practices;
- applying school community data to actively attract and recruit participation on school council that resembles that of the student population attending the school;
- building an understanding with the community about the role and the value that school councils play in improving student success in class, virtually, and at home;
- ensuring all community members, including those who are newcomers or marginalized, have transparent and equitable access in participating on school councils; and
- finding ways to remove barriers to improve access and engagement with school councils.

Creating a Welcoming/Inclusive Meeting Space that Engages in Practices that Foster Collaboration:

- facilitating the opportunity and creating the safe space for school community members to identify needs and for schools and school councils to actively respond to the identified needs;
- communicating and collaborating with school councils to share information about Board and Ministry mandates and respond to community feedback;
- encouraging school council members to share their ideas for advancing student achievement and well-being;
- facilitating learning for school councils to strengthen collaborative relationships, foster equitable and inclusive practices, and create safe and welcoming environments;
- working with school councils to invite input into relevant decision-making within the scope of the school councils mandate;
- supporting parents/guardians/families in informing the school improvement plan; and
- developing a fundraising plan in partnership with school council members that is reflective of/responsive to the needs of the school and the community.

Communication of School Council Roles and Procedures and Business

- communicating the dates and times of meetings with the school community;
- sharing the names of the school council members with the school community;
- sharing the information needed to complete the Annual Report with the Chairs;
- assisting the school council in communicating with the school community in a variety of formats and languages, and
- forwarding information on community resources to school councils.

Ensuring Council Roles and Responsibilities are Fulfilled Regarding Policy, Procedures and By-laws

- engaging in internal conflict resolution activities in accordance with relevant Board policies and procedures, and the school council constitution and/or by-law;
- referring internal disputes of school councils to the Superintendent of Education, if required;
- ensuring school councils understand their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the school

- councils policy and procedure and appropriate guidelines and legislation;
- supporting school councils in understanding the implementation of Board policies and procedures and their role in policy review process; and
- collecting feedback from the school council and reporting back on the impact and value to school improvement and student success

School Councils are responsible for:

School Council Equitable and Inclusive Representation and Engagement:

Sharing lived experiences to foster an understanding of community needs and to work towards achieving shared objectives.

Creating a Welcoming/Inclusive Meeting Space that Engages in Practices that Foster Collaboration:

- supporting and promoting family and community engagement in advancing student achievement and well-being and mental health in an equitable and inclusive manner;
- reviewing school data sets as an input into school council activities to co-create solutions and to be responsive to the needs of the student and school community;
- collaborating together as a school council, not as individual school council members, to make recommendations in the development and implementation of the school improvement plan;
- working with the school principal to reconcile the impact/influence/value that the school council activities have on student success and school improvement; and
- collaborating with the school principal to coordinate community resources that support student learning, achievement and well-being and mental health.

Communication of School Council Roles and Procedures and Business

- communicating with and providing ongoing advice to the school principal on school-related matters; and
- understanding and communicating with members of the community about the roles and responsibilities of school councils as outlined in the school councils policy and procedure and appropriate guidelines, policy and procedures as required.

Collaborative Responsibility of both the School Council and the School Principal

School Improvement Plan

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies and outlines the school's needs, practices, and the work required to achieve school developed targets and goals. The goals of the SIP align with the Board priorities, goals, strategies, and plans. They are reviewed and updated on a continual basis. An important part of the development and review of the SIP is the school council's input. The school principal shares and collects input on the SIP as part of their responsibilities on the school council.

Policy And Procedure Review Process

An important responsibility of school councils is to coordinate input on all policies under review. School principals support school councils in understanding the implementation of Board policies

and procedures and their role in the review process. To learn more about the policy and procedure review process go to the webpage on [A Guideline for Policy and Procedure Review](#). Go to a [List of Policies](#) currently available for comment to be an important part of the review process. Recommendations to the Board shall be reflected in the minutes of the respective school council's meeting.

School Council Meetings

There are many strategies that can be employed to ensure school council meetings are effective and productive. Ensuring equitable access for participation it is recommended that council meetings operate in a hybrid face to face/virtual manner. Providing child minding also supports attendance at meetings. Ensuring the school community knows that they can attend virtually and turn on translation options or closed captioning (if available on the platform) supports accessibility for newcomers and anyone who is hearing impaired. Additionally:

- There must be at least 4 meetings held during the school year.
- The first meeting of the year must be held within the first 35 calendar days of the school year.
- Communication regarding the date, time and place of the meeting must be shared with the community 14 days prior to the meetings.
- An agenda, co-developed by the Chair/Co-Chair and the school principal must be shared with the community prior to the meeting.

Models for Meetings

Each school council can operate in a manner that is meaningful for that particular school and community.

For this reason, many different kinds of councils have evolved. Each one is designed to meet the particular needs of its school, but must be focused on creating a strong learning environment for students. The model by which your school council operates should be outlined in your school council by-laws

There are two common governance/operational models that are used by school councils. When choosing both a meeting model and a decision making model consider which model is most inclusive of all voices and welcoming to all communities.

Meeting models include:

- **Assembly/Town Hall Model** – Decisions are made at regular, open meetings of the entire school community. The executive members act only to carry out the wishes of the assembly. If this model is chosen, the school council may include all parents/guardians/families of students at the school who wish to be members. The elected Chair/s would facilitate the meeting and call for a vote if needed. (See the by-laws for voting rights)
- **Representative Model** – Acts like a representative advisory Board to conduct the day-to-day business and reports back to the wider school community two or more times a year.

- **Circle Model** - Circle discussions are dialogues where all participants have an equal voice. The goal is to foster the sharing of ideas, opinions, and perspectives in a safe, non-judgmental environment. Typically, circle meetings take place under the direction of a Chair or moderator who helps guide the conversation and encourages equal participation.

Models for Decision Making

For all decisions, no matter the model, you must determine that you have a quorum (enough people present at the meeting to make the vote valid) and decide what represents a majority for your council (usually 50 per cent plus one of the members present).

There are two common models frequently used by school councils to make decisions:

- **Consensus** – This model requires that each decision maker agrees to the final outcome, but not necessarily to all parts of it. Council members agree the total package best meets everyone’s needs and supports it on that basis.
- **Majority Vote** – Ample time is required for school council members to become informed on the issue and to discuss it thoroughly. Majority vote is effective when it is not likely that a compromise will be reached. This style of decision making can create a win/lose situation.

Consensus Building Model for Decision Making

Reaching consensus requires members to find common ground. Everyone helps reach the final decision and everyone must agree to it. Because all members have the chance to influence and understand the final decision, it may be reached with less conflict than might be the case with a formal vote and should receive everyone’s support. Many school councils indicate that this is their preferred approach.

Making decisions by consensus:

- allows members to take different perspectives and values into account when examining issues;
- allows for flexibility and compromise in arriving at solutions;
- is based on respect for all members and their values;
- can result in decisions that are more creative and balanced because they take account of a range of views and that are more effective because they are made by members who are informed about all aspects of the question;
- Shared guidelines for school councils around consensus decision making; helps ensure that final decisions have the support of everyone, thus promoting a sense of commitment to and ownership of the decisions and resulting in decisions that are more enduring;
- creates a sense of common purpose; and
- allows all members to maintain the integrity of their personal values while agreeing to a resolution.

When making decisions by consensus, the chair or co-chairs tries to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard.

In working towards a decision by consensus, participants:

- identify the issue or problem;
- relate the issue to goals;
- list the options or proposed actions;
- explore the options and evaluate their appropriateness and effectiveness as ways to achieve agreed-upon goals;
- choose the option(s) most likely to achieve the goals; and
- make a plan for implementing the option(s).

Consensus takes time, commitment, patience, and persistence. Using this process strengthens your team by building trust, establishing an atmosphere in which diverse opinions are valued, and energizing and involving all members by helping ensure that they see themselves as equal participants. Once a decision is reached by consensus, your school council may choose to formalize the decision through a motion. Reaching decisions by voting often expedites the business of a meeting as they usually take less time to arrive at than decisions reached by consensus. If your council chooses to reach decisions by majority vote, everyone on the council should be well informed about the item being voted on, and the council as a group should discuss all of the implications of voting for or against the item before a vote is called by the chair or a co-chair.

When you make a decision by consensus, it means that every member of the council agrees with the decision. Even people who may not fully support the decision have agreed that it is acceptable and that they will not work against it. Although arriving at consensus can be time-consuming, it is well worth the effort. Consensus ensures that every member has a voice in the decision-making process and builds respect for differing points of view. It also results in greater commitment and support from all members.

Majority Voting Model

If reaching a consensus proves difficult, an alternative option is to hold a majority vote. Voting is a commonly employed method for decision-making, and it can expedite the process by requiring less discussion to arrive at an acceptable solution. Nonetheless, it is important to note that voting may lead to divisions among council members, as it inherently involves a winning and losing side. Those who find themselves on the losing side of a vote might be less inclined to fully accept the outcome or endorse the subsequent action plans that stem from it. If you decide to proceed with a vote, you should follow the voting procedures outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education Handbook School Councils: A guide for members. Section 8.9 Voting (available at <https://files.ontario.ca/pdf-2/edu-school-councils-guide-members-en-2022-03-07.pdf>).

Agendas

- A carefully planned and organized agenda is foundational to a successful meeting. A good agenda briefly outlines what you intend to discuss and in what order.
- Items on the agenda should reflect the concerns and interests of your school community.
- Each meeting's agenda can be as simple or as complex as you want. The items can be numbered as well as listing the speaker who will address each topic.
- The agenda should be prepared by the chair in consultation with the school principal and distributed to each council member, in a reasonable amount of time prior to the meeting.

- At the beginning of each meeting the chair should ask if anyone has items to add to the agenda.

Suggested Monthly Agenda Action Items

Outlined below are various agenda items that might appear on your council's agenda. Included are tasks specified in the [School Councils Policy and Procedure](#) and [Ministry Regulations](#) as well as other items that are a regular part of most council meetings. There are many other items that will appear throughout the year and should be added accordingly. This is intended only as a rough guide to help you organize your year.

Agenda items at every meeting **could** be but are not limited to:

- Welcome/Introductions
- Review the agenda
- Adopt previous minutes
- Student Council report (where appropriate)
- School Principal/VP report
- Teacher report
- Financial report
- Report from other committees
- New business
- Date of next meeting/adjourn

Prior to your first meeting you must have a meeting for the election of council members. This meeting must take place within the first 30 calendar days of the school year.

September

- Review School Council Handbook and videos (this is required under policy #262)
- Review mission/yearly goals
- Appoint community member
- Plan for the recruitment of a diverse membership that is representative of the community
- Establish operative norms and by-laws
- Establish sub-committees
- Report from school principal on current school improvement plan
- Share past year's fundraising plan (develop new plan in October)
- Shared with the community 14 days prior to the meetings.
- Share dates and programs for [School Council Forums](#) if available

October -May

- Team building
- Develop communication plan to reach all community members regarding the work of school council
- Share communication to school community on agendas, operating procedures and on-going of the council
- Establish any learning needs or interests that the council would like to address over the school year
- Develop fundraising plan: main fundraisers, spending priorities

- Develop an outreach plan to increase membership from marginalized community groups
- Sharing of school data sets (EQAO, Every Student Counts, School Climate Survey, demographic data...)
- [Active School Travel](#) strategies
- Give input into the updating of the school improvement plan
- Review and update the Principal Profile ([Appendix B](#))
- Review and provide input on School and Board policies
- Review school council by-laws
- Invite guest speakers on topics that are reflective of community identities, needs and interests
- Share the date and program for the PEAC Regional Symposium when known

June

- Review the work of the council of the year and communicate to the school community
- Review the school improvement plan
- Review slate of officers needed for next year
- Set date for election
- Finalize any outstanding financial reporting items
- Finalize annual report and year end report to the community

Please see [Appendix C](#) for a sample template to use for creating an agenda for school council meetings

Best Practice: Ensure the process by which council members may request an item to be added to the agenda is included in the school council constitution and/or by-law and communicated to members of the school community.

Minutes

- Meeting minutes must be taken at every meeting. Both minutes and financial records must be kept for a four-year period and be accessible to any member of the public.
- Minutes should be linked in a school council newsletter once approved to ensure all parents/guardians/families have access to the information.
- Minutes of school council meetings should include a summary of each discussion and a record of all decisions or recommendations made by the council. A verbatim transcript is not required, but sufficient details are needed for reference and to ensure all viewpoints are included.

Best Practice: Minutes should be written up and distributed to committee members in draft format within two weeks of the meeting. They should be passed at the next regular meeting. Copies of minutes must be kept in the main office for anyone to see, at any time as well as posted on a school notice Board or website.

Please see [Appendix D](#) for a sample template to use for minute taking during school council meetings

Running Effective Meetings

Facilitating a School Council Meeting

Participants in meetings should feel that the time they spent was worthwhile. This is done by ensuring that certain responsibilities, roles and goals are confirmed before, during, and after the meeting. It is important to communicate this to the whole school community to build transparency and clarity on the role and work of the school council. You may wish to use the following list to see how well your group is doing.

Before the meeting:

- Book a meeting room - send out a link for a virtual or hybrid meeting
- Order refreshments - asking attendees if they have any allergies or other food restrictions -
- Prepare and circulate an agenda to the school community that is translatable
- Organize child minding - communicate what that will look like for families
- Make sure a link is sent to the community so people can join remotely
- Ensure translation options are available and send out instructions to the community should they be joining online
- Put the items on the agenda in order of priority
- Check the room arrangements and audio-visual/tech equipment
- Ensure appropriate materials are on hand
- Review any requests from the public to present at the council meeting, with the Chair, school principal and council members

At the beginning of the meeting:

- Call the meeting to order at the designated time
- Welcome attendees and make introductions
- Be certain there is a recorder, ideally the council secretary
- State the purpose of the meeting
- Review and agree on the tentative agenda
- Estimate the amount of time to be spent on each item
- Make clear the roles of members as either giving input, making decisions or brainstorming ideas...

During the meeting:

- Keep the group focused on its purpose
- Make processes clear to everyone and check for understanding
- Monitor the discussion so that everyone has a chance to speak
- Clarify and summarize when appropriate
- Assist the group in using agreed on procedures
- Bring out all sides of an issue
- Check that all voices have the opportunity to be heard and taken into consideration
- Move the group toward decisions
- Check for consensus

At the end of the meeting:

- Hold a Public Questions Period for members of the public in attendance

- Make sure assignments and agreements are clear
- Announce the date, time and place of the next meeting
- Identify the purpose of the next meeting and any items that will be on the agenda
- Ask about any other agenda items that council members may want included on the next agenda
- Debrief or adjourn the meeting

After the meeting:

- Check with the recorder to be sure that the minutes are clear before distributing
- Help others carry out the decisions made during the meeting
- Ensure the meeting minutes are available to the school community in multiple languages

School Council Elections and Operational Constitution and/or By-Laws

Elections

Election procedures and how to fill vacancies between elections must be included in the school council's operational constitution/by-laws. If by-laws are already in place, the council may choose to continue it providing there are no conflicts with [the Ontario Regulation](#) or the Board's policy #262: School Councils.

In terms of when the election of school council members occurs, consider the following:

- Set a date for elections, that is confirmed by the chair(s) of the school council in consultation with the school principal, as part of the May/June agenda items for school councils;
- Identify the date for the first school council election during the first 30 calendar days of the school year in the case of a new school; and
- Provide at least 14 days' notice of dates, times and locations of the election of school council members to parents/guardians/families of students enrolled in the school.

Several members of the school council have important roles related to election of school council members:

- School principals shall, in accordance with all applicable legislation, Board policies and procedures, and best practices, support the school council in creating a constitution and/or by-law that is fair and equitable and includes election procedures and the filling of vacancies;
- School councils shall, work with the school principal to create procedures for election of school council members and for the filling of vacancies as part of the constitution/by-law; hold elections for school council members; and, fill membership vacancies by election or appointment in accordance with the school council constitution and/or by-law;
- School council members shall hold office until the first meeting of the school council after elections are held in the next school year; and
- Any parent/guardian/family with a child enrolled in the school is eligible for election to the school council by indicating their interest through self-nomination/nomination in writing using this [nomination form](#). It is particularly important to ensure parents/guardians/families who are newcomers and/or from marginalized groups understand their eligibility. Each parent/guardian/family has one vote in the election of school council members.

The clear steps for how school elections are to be conducted are outlined in the school council's

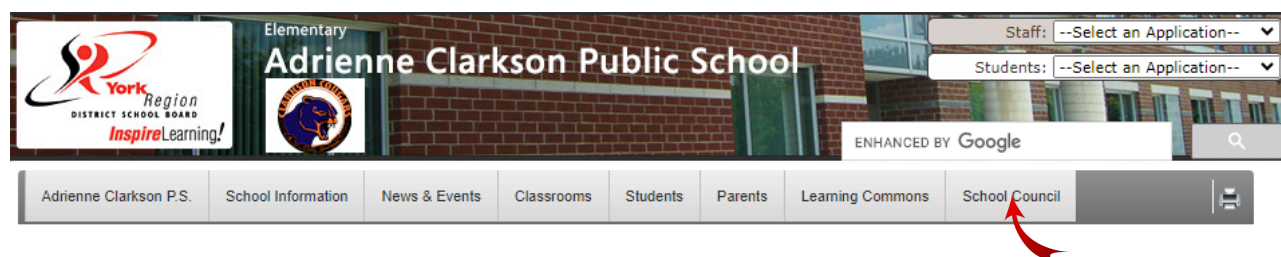
operational constitution/by-law and adhere to democratic, ethical, and equity-centred principles. Details regarding the elections and the list of candidates should be well publicized and elections are to be by secret ballot. In the past, many council elections have been by acclamation. It is anticipated that this will continue in some cases. Election by acclamation is an accepted democratic practice providing all other principles are followed. Elections can be held in person, by electronic means, by telephone, or by a combination of such means in order to ensure accessibility and equity in electing parent/guardian/family members.

Once school council members are elected, a second process begins for the election of Officers:

- Suggested September agenda items for school councils is the election of officers;
- The chair(s) and all other officers of the council are to be elected by the council from among the members elected/appointed to the council. The chair(s) must be a parent/guardian/family member of a child enrolled in the school. There is not to be a direct election of officers by the community at large;
- All parent/guardian/family members should be eligible for executive positions regardless of previous experience as supported in writing in the constitution/by-laws; and
- The term of office for all school council positions is one year

Once elected the school principal must communicate the names of the school council members to the school community within 30 days of the election.

See an election procedure sample in [Appendix E - Section 7: Elections & Voting](#). Other samples can be found under any YRDSB schools' public facing web pages under the header 'School Council' as part of the operational constitution and/or by-laws.



Consult [Ontario Regulation 612/00](#) and [Policy and Procedure #262.0, School Councils](#) for more details.

Operational Constitution and/or By-laws

All school councils are governed by an operational constitution and/or by-laws. YRDSB school councils are not required to develop lengthy constitutions because Section 15 of [Ontario Regulation 612/00](#) and YRDSB [Policy and Procedure #262.0, School Councils](#) set out the mandate and the roles and responsibilities for school councils. An operational constitution and/or by-laws support school councils to govern themselves, providing them with direction for operation of school council business and, to help the council work effectively. While by-laws remain consistent from year-to-year, and there is no need to be rewritten each year, the development of a new or review of an existing by-law begins as soon as possible after a school council meets for the first time. By-laws must not conflict with any provisions of Ontario Regulation 612/00 or the YRDSB's School Council Policy 262. Refer to [Appendix E](#) for a sample operational constitution and/or

by-law.

Best Practice: Review the school council operational constitution and/or by-law(s) annually.

School councils **MUST**, at a minimum, ensure the following items are included:

- The process for constitutional amendments
- Election procedures and the filling of vacancies between elections ([Appendix E](#))
- Participation in school council proceedings in cases of conflict of interest ([Appendix F](#))
- Electronic participation in school council meetings and decision making
- School Council Code of Ethics ([Appendix G](#))
- A conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes ([Appendix H](#))

School councils **MAY** include the following:

- Number of parent/guardian/family members and /or community representatives
- Number of times that a member may be re-elected or re-appointed
- Option to have two co-chairs
- Other executive positions such as but not limited to treasurer, secretary/minute taker
- Committees of the school council
- Governance of conduct of the council's affairs

Best practice: By-law amendments should include opportunities for members of the school community to provide input. This may include introducing changes at one meeting and making a formal decision and voting on the recommended changes at the next meeting. Sample wording for school council by-laws is outlined in [Appendix E](#).

Conflict Resolution

Each school council must have a process for resolving conflict as part of the operational constitution and/or by-law(s) as per [Ontario Regulation 612/00](#) and in accordance with all applicable Board policies and procedures.

The following is a five-step approach to resolving internal conflict and other difficult matters:

1. **Acknowledge the conflict.** As a group, acknowledge when a conflict exists and determine the source of the conflict. For example, is it related to facts? Goals? Processes? Values? Personal preferences? Beliefs? Communication? Personal Bias?
2. **Plan how to deal with the conflict.** Once the source of the conflict is defined, decide how to deal with it. This may be done by the chair, the school principal, another individual on the council, or the

entire council. (In particularly difficult times, it may be best to engage the Superintendent of Education to facilitate discussion and problem solving.) At this stage, all council members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their concerns and viewpoints.

3. **Provide time for discussion.** The chair or whoever is facilitating the discussion should introduce the problem and ask each member for input so that the nature and source of the conflict are clear. Acknowledging each person by listening attentively sets the tone for problem solving and opens the council to a variety of solutions. Emotions should be accepted and dealt with since they are a part of conflict.
4. **Taking an inclusive approach.** Members need to see solutions that reflect their needs and who they are. Taking a culturally responsive and relevant approach which recognizes that all members work and learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity promotes understanding and ensures members feel part of the solution. Practicing culturally responsive and relevant approaches supports building positive environments, improving responsibility and success, encouraging relationships, and building strong community connections. It also emphasizes that it is important for all members to examine their own biases and to analyze how their own identities and experiences affect how they view, understand, and interact with each other. This can help to prevent discrimination, harassment, and the creation of poisoned environments.
5. **Seek the best solution.** As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time. Following the discussion, the facilitator may use a process for building consensus to arrive at a new solution. Council members will be asked the following questions: Can you live with this solution? Will you support the solution? Depending on the nature of the conflict, it is sometimes best for council members to have time to reflect on the proposed solution, with the decision to be finalized at a future meeting.

If after following the above steps, your school council still feels strongly that the situation requires further consideration you may engage the Superintendent of Schools, the Director's Office or Board and Trustee Services. The matter will be reviewed and may be directed to a staff member for action.

Remember, you are welcome to speak with your local trustee at any time to share concerns or make suggestions. Depending on the circumstances, however, there is a possibility that you will be asked to follow the above steps in order to best meet your needs. Please see [Appendix H](#) for other sample conflict resolution processes.

Fundraising and Administration of Funds

Many school councils perform fundraising activities in the name of the school and as such are required to conform to the appropriate sections of [Ontario Regulation 612](#) that deal with fundraising issues. Below are some areas of the [School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure](#) on School Fundraising and Administration of School-Generated Funds for school councils and other parent/guardian/family fundraising groups. Refer to [School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure](#) for full details.

- In collaboration with the school principal the council should undertake fundraising decisions. The

school principal is ultimately responsible for activities related to the school.

- The fiscal year for school councils is September 1 to August 31 of the following year.
- The Ministry of Education in its document, [School Councils A Guide for Members \(2002\)](#), states “School councils should be aware that, because the school Board is a corporate entity and the school is not, any funds raised by the school council (and any assets purchased with those funds) belong, legally, to the Board.”
- All fundraising activities and expenditures must be conducted in accordance with federal, provincial and municipal laws and Board policies and procedures. Particular attention needs to be paid to policies on purchasing, conflicts of interest and other similar policies.
- The school principal remains responsible, on behalf of the Board, to ensure that all fundraising activities are in compliance with Board policies and procedures. Money collected from fundraising activities is to be provided to the school and kept in the school pending deposit to the school generated funds bank account. There does not need to be a vote by council to “release funds” to the school principal. The school principal, in partnership with the school council, makes decisions on the manner in which the funds are to be used in line with the school council fundraising plan.
- A financial report must be presented at each meeting of the council and receipt of the report recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- All records are to be kept for a period of seven years at the school.
- Where a separate fundraising group exists it is to become a subcommittee of the school council.
- Where possible, two or more individuals should be present when the money is counted and bank deposits are prepared.

The Fundraising Plan

The school principal is responsible to develop a fundraising plan in partnership with the school council that is reflective of and responsive to the needs of the school and the community as part of their responsibilities on the school council. Developing this plan should take place during the first or second meeting of the school year. Watch this informative YouTube [video](#) for more insight into the development of a Fundraising Plan.

Part of the responsibilities of school councils is a written Annual Report that includes fundraising activities. It must be submitted to the school principal and the Board. Select [Annual Report](#) for more information and to access the submission form.

Financial Record Keeping

- Financial records for the school council may be obtained by the school for the council to refer to as needed. Fundraising activities must comply with the policies established by the Board ([School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds](#)). Funds may be raised and spent for a purpose as outlined in the school fundraising plan, in accordance with Board policies. Textbooks and materials that support the curriculum should be paid for from the school budget.
- The treasurer should obtain from the school and present a monthly report and at the end of the year, provide an annual report to the school community. Minutes must be retained for a minimum of four years and are available for anyone to see without charge. Financial records are to be kept by the

school for seven years.

Fun Fairs

Review [Purchasing Services guidelines for Fun Fairs](#) (equipment rentals, food trucks, etc.) School fundraising events are to support parent/guardian/family/student engagement and purchases for student extracurricular items/enhancements. It is not to support advertising of private corporations as per the policy and procedure #676.

Please remember this when having activities or tables at funfairs. Tables may be for parent/guardian/family crafts not for vendors/profit companies to advertise their business.

Raffle Guidelines

Raffles, lotteries and bingo fall under municipal laws and schools are responsible to contact their local municipality and obtain a license where required. Obtaining the license is quite a lengthy process and for this reason, schools are discouraged from setting up lotteries/raffles/bingos. According to the municipalities a raffle license is required if tickets are sold, a prize exists and there is a draw. If one of the 3 items does not exist (i.e. tickets are not sold by holding a silent auction) then the license is not required. An option is that the school could hold a silent auction at an upcoming concert evening/other event. Since no tickets are sold, a license is not required.

Gift Card Guidelines

As gift cards are not a secure method of payment (i.e. can be lost or stolen, similar to having cash in a drawer) and there is no audit trail (i.e. who actually received the gift card) they are not supported by the Board. Board purchasing methods must be used for purchases (ie. Purchase orders through NAV financial system, P Cards, cheques from SGF or Petty Cash, etc).

Gift cards to assist families in need:

Schools can work with their Community Partnership Developers to identify families who are in need. Schools may consider utilizing previous accrued funds (i.e. Food for Learning, Student Nutrition Program, President's Choice, etc.) in school generated funds. These funds may be used to support families if approval has been received by the organization and communicated in the school fundraising plan. It is recommended that schools provide cheques to these families as gift cards and e-transfers are not supported.

Gifts/gift cards to thank staff (i.e. teachers, lunch room assistants, caretakers, secretary) for a job well done:

Gifts/gift cards must be purchased using social funds or any other personal funds collected from staff. The Operating budget, school generated funds, school council, student council funds or any other fundraising funds are not to be used to purchase gifts/gift cards for Board employees or other BPS employees as a

thank you for a job well done.

Gift cards/Prizes for students:

Schools should not purchase gift cards to distribute to students as they are not a secured method (i.e. can be lost or stolen, similar to having cash in a drawer) and there is no audit trail (i.e. no cheque associated to a payment to identify who actually received the gift card).

School Lunch Programs

A school lunch program may be established as a school fundraising activity. There are guidelines that must be followed to ensure compliance with government legislation and the [Board Food Services Policy#135](#).

Elementary lunch programs are defined as optional alternative lunches for students provided by private suppliers selected by individual schools. Parents/guardians/families enter into direct agreement with the supplier for the contracting of this service. School principals are encouraged to work with their school councils and parents/guardians/families when considering offering a school lunch program.

Areas to consider include:

- Impact on school personnel and facility resources
- Volunteer requirements
- Cultural diversity when making choices for vendors and food choices
- Fundraising opportunities
- When selecting a supplier schools must ensure that these companies can comply with the following minimum requirements:
 - Carry a minimum of \$2,000,000 in liability insurance with the Board named as an additional insured
- Offer a food allergy management program to ensure a safe eating environment for all students
- Provide Vulnerable Sector Screening checks for all employees who will be in contact with students
- Operate food services preparation facilities that are inspected regularly by Regional Health Services
- Offer foods which follow [Canada's Food Guide](#) and in accordance with the provincial government's [Healthy Food and Beverage Policy](#)
- All Board policies and procedures
- All agreements and contracts must include a 30 day cancellation clause in favour of the school and shall expire at the end of each school year.

Engaging in Learning

School Council Forums

[School Council Forums](#) take place annually, usually in mid to late October. These events may take the form of speakers and workshops held in each Community Education Centre (East, West North and Central) The forums provide school council members with information on Ministry and Board initiatives and information to support the work of school councils in their school communities. There is also an opportunity for dialogue with local trustees, council members and Board and school administrators.

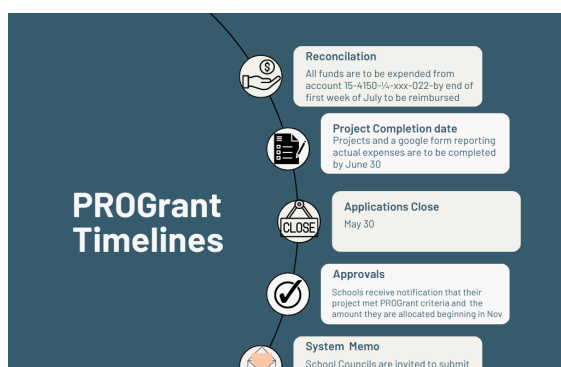
PEAC Regional Symposium

[The PEAC Regional Symposium](#) draws all representatives from school councils from across the region together. This one day event is designed to maximize the learning from across the region and allow for sharing on a much larger scale. Information about both sessions is shared with the local school councils by the School principal and area Superintendent with the local school councils.

PRO Grant Projects

Each Fall, schools are notified about the process to apply for a Ministry funded grant called [Parents Reaching Out Grant - or PRO Grant](#). Some highlights include:

- The school principal is notified of the maximum amount of the PRO Grant per school and invites a Call for Proposals;
- Projects must meet criteria that might include: reflecting the diversity and engagement needs of the school community; focusing on creating identity affirming schools and communities; demonstrating a commitment to respecting the role of parents/guardians/families in students' educational experiences; and parent/guardian/family resources, parent/guardian/family engagement sessions, and/or parent/guardian/family information sessions;
- School councils work with the school principal to submit a single application for a project at their school or to work in partnership with other school councils;
- School principals will be notified of the status of their school's PRO Grant application and are encouraged to create an outreach plan to inform parents/guardians/families of the program and its desired outcomes;
- For funding and expense parameters, school principals can refer to earlier communication. Of paramount importance is that all expenses are made from the school's PRO-Grant account and that NO School Generated Funds are to be used for PRO-Grant purchases as reimbursement is not permitted from this Ministry Fund for SGF expenses; and
- School principals will be asked to submit PRO Grant project/program information through the Annual School Council Report as well as report on PRO Grant Details of Purchases through a google form sent mid May.



School Council Communications

It is the role of the school principal and council to support and promote the school council's operations and activities by communicating with the school community to build an understanding within the community about the role and the value that school councils play in improving student success in class, virtually, and at home. The school principal is also responsible for ensuring compliance around all responsibilities for communication under Policy and Procedure #262.

On going and transparent communication between the council, the school and the community is essential to the success of the work of the council. Outlined in the school council policy it is the responsibility of the council to communicate with members of the community about the role and responsibilities of the council

School Council Email

Generic school council email accounts have been created for school council chairs. This service:

- eliminates the need to collect personal email addresses
- protects the privacy of personal email account information
- enhances collaboration amongst school councils
- facilitates the sharing of information between the Board and school councils

ALL SCHOOL COUNCIL COMMUNICATION MUST ABIDE BY THE BOARD'S [INFORMATION ACCESS AND PRIVACY PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURE](#) AS WELL AS [CASL: CANADA'S ANTI-SPAM LEGISLATION](#)

One account is automatically created per school for school council chairs. For schools with co-chairs, each chair may have their own email account. Requests for a second account are to be sent to [YRDSB ServiceDesk](#) The accounts are directly identified with the Board (e.g. stonehaven.es@sc.yrdsb.edu.on.ca). Although formal training and ongoing technology support is not available by Board staff, a guide is given to school council chairs and online help is available within the email application.

Passwords to the accounts are reset on October 1 each year in keeping with the transition after elections of school council chairs. Sealed envelopes with the email account name, password and instructions are forwarded to each school office for school council chairs. School council chairs should be aware that email, internet and social media are not private communication tools because others can read or access them.

Generic email accounts increase the ability to communicate in an effective and efficient manner electronically and allow for easier two-way or group communication. Information normally circulated or forwarded to school councils by Board staff will be sent out in electronic format. Every effort will be

made to avoid sending large attachments or lengthy emails.

Email is used to distribute documents for consultation and to inform school council chairs of new information available to them on the website with links.

School council chairs need to review the information that is sent to them and decide whether the information needs to be:

- printed for school council members to review at a future school council meeting (each school is allotted a budget for the purpose of photocopying materials for school councils);
- summarized verbally for school council members at school council meetings (making the information part of the minutes); and
- forwarded electronically to their members to read for information purposes

School Council Chairs Edsby Hub Group

There is a school council Edsby Hub available to school council chairs and co-chairs. This group was created to support communication between school councils. It is moderated by Board staff and PEAC members.

Chairs and co-chairs receive an invitation in Edsby to join the group in the fall after their election. The Edsby Hub is a place to post questions and share ideas with other school council chairs from across the Board. To learn how to use the school council hub group in Edsby watch this [how to video](#) narrated by a YRDSB parent.

The following types of school council messages cannot be communicated through school/ communication channels:

- For the purpose of government lobbying/advocacy;
- Content to be used for individuals or organizations to engage in their own business or financial transactions for personal financial gain; or
- In a manner that is unprofessional and undermines the authority of the school principal and school staff.

School Council Annual Report

The school principal and school council chairs receive a link to the Annual School Council Report at the end of each school year. It is also available on the Board website. It is at this time that the council chair/s work with the school principal to reconcile the impact and value that the council has had on the school community.

- A written annual report, including fundraising activities, must be submitted to the school principal and the Board. The [annual report template](#) will be available on the Board website in the spring each year.
- The Annual School Council Report and a year end summary on the school council's activities and

funds collected and allocated must be made available and shared with the school community

Appendices

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can Board employees be members of council? What about spouses of employees?

A Board employee who does not work in the local school is permitted to fill any position on council for which they are otherwise eligible (except chair) provided they inform the electors of their employment. Employees who work in the local school for which they are seeking a position on council may only seek the staff position for which they are eligible (that is, teaching or support staff representative). School assistants are exempt from the limitations of this provision. The eligibility of employees' spouses is not limited in any way. For the purposes of eligibility, "employee" is defined as a "member of a bargaining unit, a manager, or an administrator."

2. How are school council elections to be conducted?

It is important that basic democratic principles are adhered to in planning annual elections and that constitution and/or by-law(s) be prepared that clearly outlines the election process to all members of the school community. It is essential that all parents/guardians/families have a right to express their willingness to run for council. Details regarding the elections and the list of candidates should be well publicized and elections are to be by secret ballot. In the past, many council elections have been by acclamation. It is anticipated that this will continue in some cases. Election by acclamation is an accepted democratic practice providing all other principles are followed.

The level of campaigning, the use of candidate profiles, speech requirements and other specifics regarding the elections should be clarified in each council's constitution and/or by-law(s).

3. How is the chair of the council selected?

The chair and all other officers of the council are to be elected by the council from among the members elected/appointed to the council. The chair(s) must be a parent/guardian/family member. There is not to be a direct election of officers by the community at large.

4. How should school council conflicts be handled?

Each school council must have a constitution and/or by-law(s) regarding conflict resolution. A sample is included in the school council handbook. It is important to be proactive in managing conflict. Building strong relationships and trust is critical. So too, is practicing open communication. Don't let conflicts simmer. School council constitution and/or by-law(s) regarding conflict resolution should focus on solving problems within the council. You are encouraged to make good use of your school principal as a resource. If the conflict cannot be resolved internally, your school superintendent should be contacted. They/He/She may act as a facilitator and provide clarification of relevant Board policies, procedures or Ministry regulations.

5. Are fundraising activities a function of a school council? What can be purchased with funds raised by the council?

Regulation 612/00 recognizes fundraising as a legitimate and worthwhile activity for school councils. It can be an effective way for councils to achieve their overriding purpose of supporting student learning in their local school. Fundraising must, however, be carried out in accordance with Board policies on fundraising and funds must be spent on Board approved items as per the school fundraising plan. These are critical requirements so that all councils remain compliant with Board and Ministry legislation and are thereby protected legally by the Board. Refer to [School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure](#) for details.

6. Should the council take out liability insurance? Are we covered by the Board's liability insurance?

School councils that are acting in accordance with Ministry legislation and all relevant Board policies and procedures are protected legally by the Board.

7. Can everyone who shows up at a council meeting be considered to be a member and therefore vote on decisions/recommendations of the council?

This practice would be inconsistent with Board and Ministry policy. Members of councils are those who have been duly elected/appointed according to [School Council Policy and Procedure](#) and the constitution of the local council. All attendees at meetings should have an opportunity to have input into the discussions of the council but responsibility for making decisions is up to the duly elected council members who represent the entire school community . It should also be noted that voting on controversial issues is seldom the best approach. Reaching a consensus that all members in attendance can support is often the better way to handle matters of this nature.

8. Who do I call for clarification if I have any further questions about school council matters?

The first person to contact for clarification on school council legislation and Board policy is your local school principal. They are the agent of the Board in your school and are knowledgeable of these matters.

Appendix B - Sample - Principal Profile (adapted from TVDSB)

**Developing an Administration(Principal) Profile
School Council Template for Input into Principal Selection**

School _____
School Council _____ Date _____ 20 _____

Each York Region District School Board school council is asked to provide to their Superintendent an annual Principal Profile for their school. This template provides the school council a format in which to discuss and comment upon the characteristics best suited to your school community.

Please remember that this information is not an evaluation of the current school principal/vice-principal in your school. It is a reference document which will be used by the Superintendent and trustees in the process of considering future transfers or appointments for school principal or vice-principal. You are welcome to include any additional items as deemed appropriate by the school council.

Please note that this template is supplied as a general guideline. The following are important factors to consider:

Step One List five interesting and relevant particulars about your School.

Step Two The Image of the School Leader

School principals and vice-principals play an essential role as school leaders; utilize the [Leadership Framework](#) for School Administrators as an additional source.

Sample discussion items for school council:

Equity and Inclusion

- Ensures fairness is present in all aspects of school life.
- Embeds equity in all aspects.
- Encourages true parental/guardian/family involvement and seeks for innovative ways to guarantee a diverse School Council.
- Leads by example.
- Provides many meaningful opportunities for staff, students, and community.
- Facilitates meaningful communication among home, school and community.
- Ability to advocate for all students.
- Promotes and acknowledges the richness of the community encompassing all diversity.
- Strong community base – one who celebrates the community’s diversity and promotes it and inclusiveness within the school.
- Welcomes the community into the school and ensures the community is reflected within the school.

Please provide the leadership characteristics best suited to the needs of your community:

Student Success and Well-Being

- Ability to implement sound programs.
- Understands ministry and curriculum policy.
- Demonstrates knowledge of curriculum requirements, including the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP's).
- Conducts systematic reviews of all programs.
- Sets a tone that is fair and fosters mutual respect.
- Promotes co-curricular activities and fosters positive school spirit.
- Knowledge of effective transitions and facilitates these transitions for students and parents/guardians/families (eg. Grade 5 –6, or elementary school to secondary)
- Ensures a variety of achievement measures, including for example EQAO assessment results form and integral part of program reviews and subsequent development of plans for student achievement.
- Communicates School Improvement Plans to staff, parents/guardians/families, the school council and the school community.
- Uses a variety of assessment results to review programming for students.
- Ensures that school results are clearly communicated to parents/guardians/families.

Please provide the leadership characteristics best suited to the needs of your community:

parent/guardian/family and Community Engagement

- Regards parents/guardians/families as partners valuing parent/guardian/family leadership.
- Appreciative and supportive of parents'/guardians'/families' role in the school community.
- Shares and seeks input into School Improvement Plans, School Budget and Staffing models.
- Ensures measures of school results are communicated to parents/guardians/families in parent/guardian/family friendly language.
- Timely two-way communication with parents/guardians/families including newsletters and meetings, focus groups.
- Establishes a clear process for communicating problems that is positive and respectful.
- Open-minded and collaborative.
- Co-constructs with parent/guardian/family leaders meaningful parent/guardian/family engagement initiatives.
- Recognizes and values the Home and School Association

Please provide the leadership characteristics best suited to the needs of your community:

Caring and Safe Schools

- Highly visible, friendly and interactive with students.
- Sensitive to the needs of all students.
- Encourages staff involvement in all aspects of school life.
- Demonstrates ability to communicate and interact appropriately with all school community partners.
- Commits to the enhancement of morale and positive working relationships among staff, students, parents/guardians/families, and the community at large.
- Regular communication with parents/guardians/families and staff.
- Establishes a clear process for communicating problems that is positive and respectful.

Please provide the leadership characteristics best suited to the needs of your community:

Please add additional comments that will be pertinent to the selection of a school principal (Administrator) for your school that has not been covered above. For example you may wish to highlight your school’s particular special needs, educational environment, uniqueness and the school community.

Signature of School Council Chair _____ Date _____

Appendix C: Sample - Agenda Template

Sample School Council Agenda Template

[Insert School Name]:
School Council Meeting Agenda
[Insert Meeting Date]:

Location:
Time:
In Person/Virtual

	Agenda Items
1.	Call to Order & Welcome
2.	Land Acknowledgement
3.	Approval of Agenda
4.	Approval of Meeting Minutes
5.	Information Items (as required) <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Teacher Report● School Principal Report
6.	Decision Items (as required) <ul style="list-style-type: none">●
7.	Other Business (as required) <ul style="list-style-type: none">●
8.	Meeting Adjournment

Appendix D: Sample - Minutes Template

Sample School Council Agenda Template

[Insert School Name]:
 School Council Meeting Agenda
 [Insert Meeting Date]:

Location:
 Time:
 In Person/Virtual

In Attendance

parent/guardian/ family Members:	Administration/Staff Members	Student Member(s)	Regrets	Other Attendees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Name (Chair) · Name (Treasurer) · Name (Secretary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Name (School Principal) · Name (Teacher) 	First Name	Name (if applicable)	Name (if applicable)

	Agenda Items	Discussion and Action Items
1.	Call to Order & Welcome	[The meeting was called to order at XX pm by council member XX]
2.	Land Acknowledgement	[Name] delivered the Land Acknowledgement
3.	Approval of Agenda	The agenda was approved [as written/as amended]
4.	Approval of Meeting Minutes	There were [no] changes or objections to the [date of previous meeting] minutes. The minutes were approved, as written
5.	Information Items (as required) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Teacher Report · School Principal Report 	
6.	Decision Items (as required)	
7.	Other Business (as required)	
8.	Meeting Adjournment	[Name] noted there was no further business and the meeting was adjourned at [time]

Future Meeting Dates: [list meeting dates]

Appendix E: Sample School Council Operational Constitution and/or By-laws

Section 1: Name and Address

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAW(S)

[Insert school name]

[insert address of school]

Revised May 3 2023

This is the operational constitution and/or By-law of [insert school name] The members of the school council shall be responsible for maintaining the constitution.

Section 2: Mission Statement

Our school council believes that collaborative partnership among the school, the family, and the community is essential to improving student achievement and well-being, and increasing a shared sense of accountability for public education.

Section 3: Purpose and Objectives

The purpose and objectives of our school council include but are not limited to:

- Fostering and encouraging effective parental/guardian/family involvement in the education of their children;
- Providing a means for regular communication and dialogue between all partners in education;
- Participating in the School Improvement Process; and
- Providing input into decisions made by the school administration, the Board, and the Ministry.

Section 4: Procedures and Operating Guidelines

The operational procedures of this Council are outlined in the Board's school council policy and procedure.

All recommendations and activities of the Council shall comply with Ministry of Education Acts, York Region District School Board Policies and Procedures, and relevant Staff Collective Agreements.

Section 5: Norms of Behaviour and Practice

The School shall develop norms of behaviour at meetings on an annual basis through discussion, activity, and consensus:

- Agenda set by members and circulated in advance
- Meetings begin and end on time
- Consensus decision-making
- All speakers and opinions are respected

- Individual students, parents/guardians/families, and staff are not discussed
- Be open-minded and objective
- Refer parent/guardian/family or student issues to the teacher or school principal

Section 6: Membership

The majority of members of the Council shall be parents/guardians/families of students enrolled in at [insert school name] in the year in which they are members:

Parent/Guardian/Family Representative

Any parent/guardian/family with a child enrolled in the school are eligible:

- For election to school council;
- For acclamation to a position on the school council when the number of candidates is equal to, or less than the number of parent(s)/guardian(s)/family(s) member positions on the council;
- To be appointed to the school council if additional vacancies exist.

Student Representatives

The student representative is a member of the school council and will be:

- Named by the student council in secondary schools;
- Appointed by the school principal after consulting with the school council, where applicable, in elementary schools.

Community Representative

The community representative will be:

- Appointed by school council members;
- The representative cannot be employed at the school as a member of a bargaining unit, an administrator or a manager;
- If the individual is employed as a member of a bargaining unit, an administrator or a manager elsewhere in the Board, they must inform other members of the council of this before the appointment.

The School Principal

Teacher Representative

The teacher representative is a member of the school council. This representative must be employed at the school and is elected by teachers employed at the school.

Support Staff Representative

The support staff member representative is a member of the school council. This representative must be:

- Employed at the school;
- Not be the school principal or vice-principal; and
- Elected by support staff members employed at the school.

All members of the school council are accountable to the school community they represent and shall:

- maintain a school wide perspective on issues
- regularly attend school council meetings
- participate in information sharing and training programs
- act as a communication link between Council and the community
- encourage the participation of parents/guardians/families and other people in the school community
- participate on Sub-Committees and assist with tasks of the Council as required

Section 7: Elections & Voting

Election Notice

- Public notice of the annual elections and nomination forms shall be given to the school community at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the election.
- Notice of the annual election shall include date, time, and location of the election.
- Written notice (paper and/or electronic) shall be given to all parents/guardians/families of registered students at [insert school name].

Election Procedure for parent/guardian/family Representatives

- Nomination. Each parent/guardian/family seeking election must:
 - Be nominated or self-nominated in writing
 - Have a child registered for that school year at [insert school name]
 - Declare if they are he/she is employed by the Board
 - parent/guardian/family election shall be by acclamation when the number of candidates is equal to, or less than the number of parent(s)/guardian(s)/family(s) member positions on the council
 - If the number of candidates exceeds the number of spots, an election must take place (see Section e)
 - An election Committee of the Council and the School Principal shall:
 - Ensure nomination forms are provided to all parents/guardians/families (as in through the opening day Book of Forms)
 - Ensure the school community is notified of election date/date/location, at least fourteen (14) days in advance of election
 - Require a written profile of all candidates for distribution at the election meeting
 - Ensure the election takes place within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the school year
- Voting
 - Each parent/guardian/family of a student enrolled at [insert school name] may cast a ballot for each vacant parent/guardian/family representative position on the Council

- When the number of candidates exceeds the number of positions, a single ballot shall be prepared containing the names of all candidates. This list shall be distributed to all parent/guardian/family at the opening voting meeting
 - Voting for the (maximum) ten spots shall occur by parents/guardians/families selecting (maximum) ten names on the ballot
 - The election shall be conducted by secret ballot
 - Counting is conducted by a non-voting attendee (administration, non-member staff, etc)
 - Reporting
 - Only release the names of successful candidates to the school community, AFTER the candidates have been informed of their success or lack thereof in being elected
- Term of Office
 - All positions on the School Council are for a term of one (1) year.
 - Elected members may seek additional terms of office.
- Vacancies
 - A vacancy in the membership of the Council—even a vacancy of an officer of the Council— does not prevent the Council from functioning.
 - Should an elected parent/guardian/family council position become vacant before the next election, the council shall fill the vacancy by appointment from the non-elected candidates from the previous election.
 - If none of the previous candidates remain interested in becoming a council member, the council may request that interested parents/guardians/families from the school community submit their names for consideration. The council shall then appoint one of those who indicate an interest.
 - When a vacant spot on council is filled, the new member’s term shall expire at the time of the next election.
 - The position may be filled, by election of Council, of a parent/guardian/family who expresses interest,
 - In the event of an officer position becoming vacant, the position must be decided by way of an election, by secret ballot, of all voting members of the Council.
- Removal due to lack of attendance

A Member who misses three (3) Council meetings shall be removed from Council and replaced according to the process in Section 4 (above).
- Voting on motions
 - While decisions of the Council are best decided through consensus, when voting is necessary.
 - Each member of the Council (excluding the School Principal/Vice Principal—but including the Teacher, Support Staff, Community, and Student representatives) is entitled to one vote.
 - Voting may take place on motions via a show of hands, unless a written vote is called for.
 - Each member of a Committee is entitled to one vote on all decisions of the Committee.

- Remuneration
 - A person shall not receive any remuneration for serving as an officer or member of a school council.
 - Reimbursement for expenses incurred as members or officers of the Council shall be in accordance with relevant procedures established by the Board.

Section 8: Executive/Officers

- Eligibility
 - All parent/guardian/family representatives on the school council should be eligible for executive positions regardless of previous experience.
- At the first meeting AFTER the election/acclamation of members, the Council representatives shall elect a Chair or two Co-Chairs:
 - Candidates for the position of chair/co-chair must be parent/guardian/family members and not employed by the Board.
 - All voting must be conducted by secret ballot.
 - In voting for co-chairs, the “list ballot”, described in Article VII, shall be used, with voters selecting two names from the list.
- Other officers which may be elected or appointed by the Council include (but are not limited to) Communications Officer, Treasurer, Secretary/Minute Taker, Fundraising Committee Chair, Active School Travel Committee Chair.
- Responsibilities
 - Chair/Co-Chair shall carry out the following tasks in accordance with the Board’s school council policy and procedures:
 - Call a minimum of four (4) meetings per year in consultation with the School Principal;
 - Consult with Council representatives prior to scheduled meetings regarding topics under consideration;
 - Ensure that all fundraising activities, management of the proceeds of fundraising, and all expenditures are in accordance with Board School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure;
 - Establish agendas for Council meetings with School Principal (including current financial statements for review at meetings);
 - Share agenda with Council members by the end of the school day prior to the scheduled meeting;
 - Chair Council meetings following the agenda;
 - Ensure minutes of meetings are duly recorded;
 - Communicate on an ongoing basis with school administration;
 - Communicate with trustee, Board staff as required;
 - Assist and act on behalf of the other co-chair; and
 - Ensure the Council Constitution is reviewed regularly.

- Communications Officer may carry out the following tasks:
 - Collect school council mail and communicates with Chair/Co-Chair;
 - Photocopies and distributes necessary information; and
 - Updates Council page on School Blog.
- Treasurer may carry out the following tasks:
 - Manage Council finances as outlined in Article Ten (X); and
 - Present written financial reports and statements including those required for each school council meeting.
- Secretary/Minute Taker may carry out the following tasks:
 - Conduct formal attendance and record same in an official record;
 - Take notes during meetings including topics under discussion, motions, and all decisions rendered; and
 - Prepare written minutes for inclusion in the Council record and distribution to Council members.
- Fundraising Officer may carry out the following tasks:
 - Chair fundraising Sub-Committee;
 - Oversee all fundraising efforts of the Council;
 - Identify fundraising targets and purpose for fundraising initiatives; and
 - Deposit funds promptly with the School Budget Secretary.

Section 9: Sub-Committees

- Establishment
 - Sub-Committees may be formed to conduct more detailed or in-depth work than is possible during Council meetings, to make recommendations to Council and to keep Council informed of issues and developments in particular areas.
 - Sub-Committees may include, but are not limited to: fundraising, elections, volunteer, constitution, health and safety, capital improvements.
 - Each subcommittee shall appoint its own Chair or Co-Chairs.
- Sub-Committee membership
 - Each subcommittee shall include at least one parent/guardian/family member of Council or an individual appointed by Council.
 - Persons who are not members of Council may be members of a Sub-Committee.
- Reports
 - Sub-Committee Chairs or designates shall present a report to Council while the Sub-Committee is active.
 - The brief reports shall outline the matters decided by the Sub-Committee and are not a forum for discussion by the Council on the whole.
- Fundraising for Sub-Committees
 - Any fundraising conduction by a Sub-Committee must be approved by the fundraising Officer and must be monitored by the Fundraising Committee.
 - All individuals in charge of fundraising activities/events must disclose to Council any financial relationship, benefit, or reward of any kind offered or received as a result of the affiliation with an outside organization.

Section 10: Meetings

- Timetable of Meetings
 - On the second meeting of the school year—following the Election meeting—a calendar of Meetings for the year shall be established in consultation with the School Principal.
 - Council shall meet a minimum of four (4) times throughout the school year.
 - Established dates and times shall be shared with the school community via paper and/or electronic communication. Communication regarding the date, time and place of each meeting must be shared with the community 14 days prior to the meetings.
 - It is recognized these dates may change at any time.
 - All meetings shall be open to the public (in the school community).
- Quorum
 - A meeting will have a quorum if a majority (50% plus one) of council members are present, and the majority of those present are parents/guardians/families.
 - A meeting may be held in the absence of a quorum, but all voting must be deferred to a later date.
 - In the absence of a Chair or Co-Chair, another Officer of the Council may chair in their stead.
- Decision-Making
 - The preferred method of decision-making is through consensus, a collective opinion or general agreement by all Council Members.
 - In the absence of consensus, the Chair may decide by way of a show of hands or silent vote by those present with a 50% plus one majority carrying the vote.
 - At any point, a Member may call for a ballot vote on a motion under discussion.
- Conflict of Interest.
 - Any time the school council does business with the potential for monetary gain/loss with any person, agency, or company, and a member of the school council has a personal or vested interest in any way with that particular person, agency, or company, that member shall declare a conflict of interest.
 - If any individual Council Member perceives themselves to be in conflict of interest they are required to declare their conflict at the outset of the relevant discussions at the time of the meeting, and the minutes are to reflect this declaration.
 - Council members are not to receive any remuneration for their work as a member of Council Conflict of Interest.
- Conflict Resolution
 - The Council will undertake to resolve all internal conflict within its mandate in a timely manner
 - Every school council member will be given an opportunity to express concern or opinion

about the issue at dispute and how the dispute has affected them.

- Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times.
- Speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption.
- The chair's responsibility is to clarify the statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised, and to set out the joint interests of all members.
- If no common ground can be identified, the chair will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further.
- If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the chair shall request the intervention of a superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.

Section 11: Finances

- Allocation (Budgeting)
 - The annual budget should be prepared by the Council Executive. It should be presented, reviewed and approved by Council, before the beginning of each school year in September or at the inaugural meeting for the respective school year.
 - Any unforeseen changes to the annual budget should be presented for review and approval at the next scheduled Council meeting.
- Expenditures for events/activities wholly or partially funded by the Council are to be presented in budget form for approval by the Council in October for the current school year.
 - All fundraising activities must be in accordance with the Board's School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure.
- Disbursement (Expenses)
 - All expenses should be school related and at a reasonable cost.
 - All non-budgeted items require Council approval.
 - All expenses incurred should be supported with original receipts. Cheque requisition and payment are arranged through the school office.
- Receipts
 - All cash receipts should be handled, collected, counted and totaled in the presence of at least two (2) Council members or volunteers.
 - Receipts should be deposited promptly by the school or stored in the school safe and recorded accurately.
 - As Per the Board's School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure, the school is to have one school generated funds account through with all school generated funds flow, the allocation of said funds being under the responsibility of the School Principal.
- Fundraising

Fundraising must take place in accordance with School Fundraising and Administration of School Generated Funds policy and procedure.

Section 12: Agendas and Minutes

- Agendas
 - Agendas shall be printed for each meeting.

- Agenda items should be submitted to the chair one week prior to the council's next meeting.
- The chair/co-chairs co-develop the agenda with the school principal prior to the meeting and it will be forwarded to school council members and school community by the end of the school day prior to the meeting.
- Minutes
 - Minutes that are translatable/accessible should be written up and distributed to committee members in draft format within two weeks of the meeting and kept in the office for anyone to see.
 - The minutes shall include motions, decisions and actions to be taken. (see [Appendix D](#))

Section 13: Annual Report

- The school council shall submit a written report on its achievements to the school principal and to the York Region District School Board following the established guidelines for such a report that includes fundraising activities, must be submitted to the school principal and the Board. The annual report template will be available on the Board website in the spring each year.
- The Annual School Council Report and a year-end summary on the school council's activities and funds collected and allocated must be made available and shared with the school community including making the report available (via distribution, public display, or electronic posting) to all parents/guardians/families and students enrolled in the school.

Section 14: Incorporation

The school council shall not be incorporated.

Section 15: Constitutional Amendments

- The school council shall review the constitution every year via a sub-committee of the Council and bring proposed amendments to the Council for approval. Amendments should include opportunities for members of the school community to provide input.
- Amendments shall be presented to the Council as motions for approval at a regularly scheduled meeting. Changes may be introduced at one meeting and decisions/voting on the recommended changes at the next meeting.
- Constitutional amendments require a 2/3 majority to be passed.

Appendix F: Sample Conflict of Interest Guidelines

Sample 1

Source: Adapted from the St. Francis Catholic School, "School Council Operating Guidelines," Paris, Ontario

Any time the school council does business with the potential for monetary gain/loss with any person, agency, or company, and a member of the school council has a vested interest in any way with that particular person, agency, or company, that member shall declare a conflict of interest and shall not discuss or vote on any such resolution relating to the matter.

Sample 2

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, School Council: A Guide for Members, 2002

Each school council member shall avoid situations that could result in an inconsistency between the overall goals and vision of the school council and a personal or vested interest that arise in connection with their duties as a school council member. Should an issue or agenda item arise during a council meeting where a council member is in a conflict of interest situation, they shall declare conflict of interest immediately and decline from the discussion and resolution.

Sample 3

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, School Council: A Guide for Members, 2002

1. A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived, or potential.
2. Members of the council shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families, or business entities in which they may have an interest, stand to benefit either directly or indirectly by decisions of the council.
3. A member shall exclude themselves from discussions in which:
 - a. A conflict of interest is likely to result.
 - b. The member's ability to carry out their/his/ her duties and responsibilities as a member of the school council may be jeopardized.
 - c. The council member, their relatives, or a business entity in which the member may have an interest, may gain or benefit either directly or indirectly as a result of actions that may be taken by the school principal or Board in response to advice that the council provides to the school principal or to the Board.
4. A member shall not accept favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the school.

Appendix G: Code of Ethics

Sample 1

The following code of ethics, derived from [Ministry guidelines](#), privacy and legal consultations made by the Board, may be used by school councils in an attempt to outline expectations for members and as a guideline for behaviour.

- A member shall consider the best interests of all students.
- A member shall be guided by the school and the Board's [mission, vision and values](#).
- A member shall act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a school council, as identified in the Education Act, its regulations, and the applicable constitution and/or by-law(s) and procedures.
- A member shall become familiar with the school's policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.
- A member shall maintain the highest standards of integrity.
- A member shall recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.
- A member shall conduct themselves in accordance with the Board's [Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedure](#).
- A member shall treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.
- A member shall encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
- A member shall acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the council.
- A member shall respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school council. and I not disclose confidential information.
- A member shall act in accordance with relevant laws, including Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), and relevant Board policies and procedures.
- A member shall advise the school principal immediately if the member believes that there may have been a privacy breach.
- A member shall abide by applicable laws and policies with respect to access, use or disclosure of Board data and information.
- A member shall limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
- A member shall use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.
- A member shall promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community.
- A member shall declare any conflict of interest.
- A member shall not accept any payment or benefit financially through school council involvement.

Sample 2

The Code of Ethics for [insert school name] School Council includes, operating in a non-judgmental manner, employing constructive discussions and reaching decisions through consensus. Council meetings are to remain free of discussion about individual parents/guardians/families, students, Board employees, trustees or other council members.

Council members shall:

- Become familiar and act in accordance with Board and school policies and operating practices
- Focus on school-wide issues and shall consider the best interests of the school and all students
- Practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth.
- Recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of individual students and Board employees
- Treat all other members with respect and shall allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption
- 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
- Accept accountability for decisions
- Identify all council agenda items and/or issues with which they have a possible conflict of interest
- Not accept any payment or benefit financially through involvement in the school council.

Appendix H: Sample Conflict Resolution Process

Sample 1

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, School Council: A Guide for Members, 2002

The Conflict Resolution Process for [insert school name] School Council includes:

1. Every school council member will be given an opportunity to express concern or opinion about the issue at dispute and how the dispute has affected them.
2. Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times.
3. Speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption.
4. The chair's responsibility is to clarify the statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised, and to set out the joint interests of all members.
5. If no common ground can be identified, the chair will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further.
6. If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the chair shall request the intervention of a Superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.

Sample 2

Source: Ontario Ministry of Education, School Council: A Guide for Members, 2002

The Conflict Resolution Process for [insert school name] School Council includes:

1. Council members are elected to serve the school community and will demonstrate respect for their colleagues on council at all times.
2. If a council member or members become disruptive during a meeting, the chair shall ask for order.
3. If all efforts to restore order fail or the unbecoming behaviour continues, the chair may direct the individual council member(s) to leave the meeting, citing the reasons for the request.
4. The removal of a member for one meeting does not prevent the council member from participating in future meetings of council.
5. The incident shall be recorded and submitted to the Superintendent of Schools within one week of the meeting.
6. When the chair has requested the removal of a member or members from a meeting, the chair shall request that the disputing members of council participate in a special meeting, the purpose of which will be to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting may be a private meeting, and shall not be construed as a meeting of the council.
7. The chair may request the intervention of an independent third party to assist in achieving a resolution to the dispute.
8. An independent third party may be a Board official or another individual mutually agreed on by the parties involved in the dispute.
9. Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement.

Appendix I: Developing a Team

Groups of people working together such as school councils do not become a team overnight. Effective teams evolve and become productive over time. Regardless of their size or composition, teams go through certain stages of development. The length of each stage varies from team to team, and may be as short as several meetings or may last many months. The sequence of stages, however, is the same for each team.

While the specifics of each stage may vary from team to team, the overall nature of each stage is consistent across teams. During the process, some of the actions and feelings of team members may not appear to be productive. This is particularly true during the dissatisfaction stage when a sense of frustration and incompetence frequently emerges. However, working through each stage is a crucial part of the team's evolution.

Stages of Effective Teams

Forming

- In the orientation stage there is testing and trust building. People are polite, impersonal, watchful and guarded.

Storming

- There is infighting and goal clarification. People sometimes choose to leave. Conflicts need to be confronted and difficulties discussed. Teams can feel stuck here. This is normal.

Norming

- The commitment builds and teams get organized. Skills are developed and procedures established. The issues are confronted.

Performing

- There is maturity and closeness as effectiveness increases. People are more resourceful, creative and supportive. Progress increases.

Norms

Group norms help frame the way people interact and support the development and progression of teams through the stages. At the very least, they will help councils establish a common purpose and assist them when meeting together. Norms should be developed cooperatively by the council

Group Norms

- express the values of the team;
- make sure every team member knows and agrees with what's expected of them/him/her;
- support the needs of the team members and the school;
- help the team evaluate its performance; and
- encourage everyone to agree on what's important to the team and provide a guide for behaviour.

Group Norms provide:

- a safety net;
- a way to take risks;

- a means to achieve higher productivity; and
- are a means to increase our effectiveness.

Group Norms Address:

- Things: materials, equipment
- Ideas: issues, opinions, values
- Self: comforts, needs
- People: behaviours, expectations

Developing Norms:

- Reflect on your own individual needs.
- Share and list the ideas with your team.
- Share with the large group and come to a consensus.

Sample

- Agenda set by members and circulated in advance.
- Meetings begin and end on time.
- Consensus decision-making.
- All speakers and opinions are respected.
- Individual students, parents/guardians/families, and staff are not discussed.
- Be open-minded and objective.
- Refer parent/guardian/family or student issues to the teacher or school principal.

Provide space and time to value the lived experiences of your diverse school community. When building an effective council that supports all students in the school community, it is essential that voices representing all students are present in whatever form they take. Creating flexible ways of contributing will allow for great representation. Valuing different ways of knowing and doing will reflect the lived experiences of the students in the work of the council.