

SCHOOL COUNCILS

Background

Section 55 of the *Education Act* requires the formation of a school council in each school in accordance with the regulations.

School Council Regulation (94/2019) states that a school is to provide advice on the development of the school's mission, vision and philosophy, policies, annual education plans, annual results reports and budget and to access information on these topics. School councils must also be provided provincial testing program results for the school, and a reasonable interpretation of those results and measures.

A school council may make bylaws governing its meetings and the conduct of its affairs and, at its discretion, may:

- ♦ Advise the Principal and Board respecting any matter relating to the school.
- ♦ Perform any duty or function delegated to it by the Board.

The Division believes school councils have the potential to serve as an effective mechanism for utilizing parental input in the operation of schools and to enhance communication among schools, the Board and the community.

The Division supports the establishment of a school council for a school in accordance with statutory requirements, Board policies and administrative procedures.

Guidelines

1. Primary and Deciding Role

School councils have a primary role in:

- 1.1 Determining their internal bylaws, finances and methods of operation.
- 1.2 Planning inservice programs for its members.
- 1.3 Reporting to the Board on the results achieved by the school council.

2. Advisory Role

A school council may, at its discretion:

- 2.1 Advise the Principal and the Board respecting any matter relating to the school.
- 2.2 Perform any duty or function delegated to it by the Board in accordance with the delegation.

- 2.3 Consult with the Principal so that the Principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister.
- 2.4 Consult with the Principal so that the Principal may ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the Board and the Superintendent.
- 2.5 Do anything it is authorized under the regulations to do.

NOTE: There are a number of ways to organize and operate a school council. The general assembly model is generally preferred because it is more inclusive. This has been the outcome wherever a collaborative process involving trustees, central and school-based administrators, teachers and parents has been utilized.

3. Establishment of School Councils

- 3.1 Where a new school council comes into existence, the Principal will call an establishment meeting of the parents of students attending the school within a reasonable period of time but not later than February 15.
- 3.2 When a school is unsuccessful in establishing a school council in any year, an information meeting must be called by the Principal within sixty (60) days of the subsequent school year.
- 3.3 The primary purpose of the meeting will be to:
 - 3.3.1 Inform the parents about school councils outlining the statutory and Board policy parameters.
 - 3.3.2 Elect and appoint or establish the processes for appointment of a school council executive.
- 3.4 If there are insufficient parents in attendance to elect the parent members of the school council executive, the Principal shall select parents to serve on an advisory committee.
- 3.5 Where a school council or equivalent is in existence, the chair or past chair will call a meeting of parents not later than seventy (70) days after the start of the school year as specified in the bylaws for the purpose of:
 - 3.5.1 Informing parents about the school council.
 - 3.5.2 Electing and appointing or determining the process for appointing a school council executive according to the bylaws.
- 3.6 If there are insufficient parents in attendance to elect the parents of the new school council executive, the chair, past chair, or Principal, where neither the chair or past chair is available, will select the parent members to serve on the school advisory committee.

4. Membership

- 4.1 It is recommended that the school council executive be composed of:
 - 4.1.1 Parents/Guardians of students attending the school (parents/guardians shall form the majority on the executive).
 - 4.1.2 A chair to be a parent, or a member who is not a parent may be elected chair of the executive if no parent is willing to be nominated as chair.
 - 4.1.3 A vice-chair, a secretary, a treasurer, or combination of these executive officers deemed suitable by the membership.
 - 4.1.4 At least one teacher.
 - 4.1.5 At least one age-appropriate student.
 - 4.1.6 Other representation as determined by the membership including school support staff and/or community.
 - 4.1.7 The Principal, as an ex-officio member.
- 4.2 The term of membership on the school council executive is to be determined by the bylaws. (It is recommended that it be one year with re-election eligibility.)
- 4.3 All parents/guardians of students attending the school are eligible members of the school council.
- 4.4 All eligible members have voting rights to be exercised through attendance or in a manner determined by the bylaws.

5. Dissolution of a School Council

- 5.1 The Minister, on the request of the Board, may dissolve a school council without notice at any time if the Minister is of the opinion that the school council is not carrying out its responsibilities in accordance with the *Education Act* and the regulations.
- 5.2 Prior to requesting that the Minister dissolve a school council, the Board will provide the school council with the opportunity to be heard on the dissolution.

Procedures

1. Constitution and Bylaws

- 1.1 The school council may draft or adopt a constitution and/or bylaws containing provisions for name, membership, frequency of meetings, functions, etc., that is within statutory and Board policy parameters.
- 1.2 The constitution should be filed with the Board as information.

2. Liaison With the Board

- 2.1 A Board member shall be designated to act as a liaison between the school council and the Board.
- 2.2 The Board member shall meet with the school council at least twice annually to discuss items of mutual interest.

- 2.3 The Board member appointed as liaison shall act as the channel of communication between the Board and the school council; however, an elected member of the council executive and the Principal may jointly present reports and/or recommendations to the Board on behalf of the school council.
- 2.4 The Board will refer the school council reports and/or recommendations to the Superintendent. (The Superintendent shall prepare his recommendations considering Division policies, needs and priorities.)

3. Operational Procedures

Each school council will establish its own operating procedures within statutory and Board policy parameters which are to be submitted by the Principal to the Superintendent.

4. Association to Fundraising / Canvassing

- 4.1 Administrative Procedure 520 clarifies the scope of fundraising that supports educational programming within the Division. As specified in that procedure, “Fundraising and canvassing initiated by a legally recognized society falls outside the jurisdiction of the Division.” Therefore, a legally structured society that associates its fundraising to a school council has no legal status as a school council, and cannot influence the decisions of a school council in conducting its legally and procedurally constituted advisory work.
- 4.2 While it is possible that a Fundraising Society and School Council could be made up of the same members, the council and the society must maintain two distinct and separate sets of by-laws and two separate sets of minutes – one for the school council and the other for the society.

5. Record Keeping

Where applicable, each school council should establish methods of keeping records for the purpose of annually supplying the Board with:

- 4.1 A report setting of the activities of the school council.
- 4.2 A financial statement.
- 4.3 A copy of the minutes of each meeting.

5. Conflict Resolution (Section 55, *Education Act*)

The Principal or the school council will apply the following procedures to resolve disputes on policies proposed or adopted for the school:

- 5.1 Either party may submit the dispute, not sooner than five (5) days or later than ten (10) days from the date of the dispute, to the Superintendent for mediation of the dispute.
- 5.2 The submission of the dispute shall be by letter that outlines the nature of the dispute, the issues involved, and the preferred resolution.
- 5.3 A copy of the letter shall be simultaneously submitted to the other party who should submit a defense of its position to the Superintendent within five (5) days.

- 5.4 The Superintendent shall attempt to mediate the dispute between the parties as soon as practicable.
- 5.5 If the mediation by the Superintendent is not successful, the dispute will be submitted by the Superintendent to the Board or committee of the Board delegated with the responsibility to settle the disputes between the parties.
- 5.6 At the next Board or committee meeting, the disputants will be permitted to appear and state the rationale for their positions.
- 5.7 The Board or committee will make a decision that is final and binding on both parties.

Reference: Section 55, *Education Act*
School Council Legislation 171/98
School Council Policy 1.8.3
School Council Regulation 94/2019

Revised September 6, 2007, May 12, 2017, November 20, 2019