

## **SCHOOL COUNCILS**

### Statement of Policy

It is the policy of the Peel District School Board that each school within the Board shall establish and maintain a School Council.

The School Council policy is aligned with and supports the principles and expectations of the Board's Human Rights policy (Policy 51) and the Equity and Inclusive Education policy (Policy 54). At all times, this policy should be interpreted to be consistent with the Board's policies and the *Human Rights Code*.

### Administrative Regulations

#### 1. Rationale

The Peel District School Board holds the beliefs that student success is the main focus of effective schools and that there is a clear connection between authentic parental involvement in schools and student achievement.

The Board believes that the main goal of School Councils is improved learning for all students. The actions of these advisory councils are to focus on activities which help young people succeed in school and on supporting communication between school and home. To support student success School Councils need to draw on the diversity and resources that each school community has to offer. Councils are an opportunity for all parts of the community to work together with their local schools and provide a forum for groups and individuals to come together and make their voices heard on behalf of students.

Successful education requires cooperative partnerships among the staff and students of the school, the home and the community. Effective relationships between the education system and communities are promoted and sustained through consultation, collaboration and communication. The Peel District School Board acknowledges the many groups which have operated successfully throughout the school system. In addition, the Board affirms the formation of parent and community groups which assist schools in advancing the interests of students.

The Board, through its actions and beliefs, promotes the following objectives of School Councils:

- a) to place the overall interests of the school and all of its students first.
- b) to act in an advisory capacity and as a resource to the school principal and, when appropriate, to the Board.
- c) to facilitate the contributions of all School Council members, parents and partners in order to share responsibility and accountability for the success of all students.
- d) to enhance parent and community involvement in the school.

- e) to promote effective consultation, collaboration and communication among home, school and community.
- f) to provide a forum for dialogue and collaboration concerning the School Success Planning initiative in order to meet shared educational goals.
- g) to enable the viewpoints of parents and members of the community to be heard.
- h) to foster good relationships among parents, school staff, students, the local community and the school board.
- i) to promote positive attitudes toward the education of students and toward public education.

## 2. Code of Ethics

- a) The School Council shall operate in a non-judgmental manner, respecting confidentiality, employing constructive discussions and reaching decisions through consensus.
- b) Council members shall recognize and respect the rights and responsibilities of individual students and Board employees.
- c) Council meetings are to remain free of discussion about individual parents, students, Board employees, trustees or other council members.
- d) Council members will identify all agenda items and/or issues with which they have a possible conflict of interest.
- e) Council members will focus on school-wide issues and what is best for the school and its students.

## 3. Structure and Composition of School Councils

The principal of the school, in consultation with any existing group(s) of parents, shall facilitate the establishment of and shall assist in the operation of the School Council and be responsible for providing the advice necessary to enable the council to operate within the Education Act and its regulations, Ministry of Education and Training guidelines and Peel District School Board policies, operating procedures and contractual agreements.

A member of the Board or a local M.P.P. cannot be a member of a School Council established by the Board.

- a) Members of a School Council shall include:
  - parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school;
  - community representative(s) who shall be public school supporter(s). A person who is employed by the Board that established a School Council cannot be appointed as a community representative on the council unless he or she is not employed at the school and the other members of the School Council are informed of the person's employment before the appointment.
  - a student (mandatory in secondary schools; in elementary schools, at discretion of the school principal);
  - the school principal;
  - a teacher representative employed in the school;
  - a support staff member;

- a person appointed by the school's Parent Teacher Association or an association existing in the school that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations.
- b) Parents and guardians shall form the majority of the council, except in adult day schools, where parent positions shall be held by students.
- c) The size of the School Council, unless vacancies exist, shall not be less than 9 where there is no student representation or 11 with a student representative. If positions remain vacant, the council shall function and continue to seek the required members.
- d) It is expected that the membership of the council will reflect the diversity of the school community. Diversity could include demographics, divisional representation (primary, junior, intermediate, senior) and school programs. The council shall consider the issue of balance in the selection of the community representative(s).
- e) Superintendents and trustees may act as a resource to the council and its committees.
- f) Despite subsection (a), a person is not qualified to be a parent member of a School Council if,
  - (i) he or she is employed at the school; or
  - (ii) he or she is not employed at the school but is employed elsewhere by the board that established the council, unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment.
- g) Membership in the School Council shall be determined in the following ways:
  - Parents/guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school.
  - The chair of the council shall be a member who is also a parent/ guardian and shall be elected by the council.
  - The community representative(s) shall be appointed by the council once it is established.
  - The student representative shall be elected by the students.
  - The school principal shall be a designated member.
  - The teacher representative shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
  - The support staff member shall be elected by members of the support staff.

The term of office for elected and appointed positions on the council is one year. A person elected or appointed as a member of a School Council holds office from the date of the first meeting of the School Council after elections, until the date of the first meeting of the School Council after the elections are held in the next school year.

In the event of an election or appointment part way through the school year, the term of office will run from the date of the election or appointment, to the date of the first meeting of the School Council after elections are held in the next school year.

- h) There will be no honorarium paid or lieu time granted to members of the School Council.
- i) The principal will support an effective liaison among the school, the various organizations within it and the School Council.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities of the School Councils

##### a) **Role of the School Council**

The role of the School Council is to provide ideas and suggestions to assist the principal and, where appropriate, school board trustees in their decision-making on educational issues. The advice should be based on the general views of the school community, and the best interests of all students in the school. The council is accountable to the school community it represents.

School Councils must operate within the Education Act and its regulations, Ministry of Education and Training guidelines and Peel District School Board policies, operating procedures and contractual agreements. Both the council and individual members can incur personal liability if they exceed their mandate.

##### b) **Advisory Responsibilities**

The School Councils will deal with issues of particular relevance to their communities, and establish their priorities on an annual basis. The school principal, and where relevant, Superintendents and trustees of the Board, will seek advice from the School Council as part of the process of making decisions with regard to the following general areas:

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

As well, the School Council will provide input to the school profile, which describes the different groups represented in the school population and the neighbourhood and may also collect details about the school's activities and educational priorities.

**c) Other Responsibilities**

In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the School Council shall:

- establish and review annually the council's goals, objectives, action plans and procedures;
- share council meeting dates, agendas and minutes with trustees
- organize information and training sessions to enable members of the council to develop their skills as council members;
- consult with parents to gather their views and preferences on matters under consideration by School Council; report on the activities of council to the school community
- set up a communication plan, communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community and, where appropriate, ensure that communication is available in the languages of the school community
- hold a minimum of four meetings per year (all meetings shall be public);
- ensure that School Council fundraising activities are conducted in accordance with policies established by the board and that funds raised are used for a purpose approved of by the board or authorized by board policies
- advise the principal about spending School Council funds and make decisions on purchases
- ensure the financial statement is included in the annual report. The financial statement must include School Council activities for the entire academic year, from September 1 to August 31 inclusive.

d) The Director shall include in his/her annual report, as approved by the Board, a section on the operation of School Councils.

**5. Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members**

A School Council shall maintain a school-wide focus on all issues.

**a) Council Members**

Members of the School Council shall:

- maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
- participate in council meetings;
- participate in information and training programs;
- act as a link between the School Council and the community;
- encourage the participation of parents and community members;
- fulfill their duties. A council member who fails to do so may, after the involvement of a facilitator, be removed by a 2/3rds vote of the members of the full council.
- strive to make decisions by consensus; however, if a vote is necessary, all council members, with the exception of the principal, are equal and can vote. A majority vote of those members present is required for approval. A tie vote is a loss.

**b) The Chair**

Annually, the School Council elects the Chair from among the parent members of the School Council. A person who is employed by the board that established the council cannot be the chair or co-chair of the council.

The Chair of the School Council shall:

- establish and communicate, in consultation with the principal, a meeting schedule for the year;
- call School Council meetings;
- prepare the agenda for meetings in consultation with the council members;
- chair the meetings and be responsible for the time management of the agenda;
- ensure that the minutes of all meetings and records of all financial transactions are kept at the school for a period of four years. The minutes and records shall be available for examination without charge by any resident in the school catchment area;
- participate in information and training programs;
- communicate with the principal (i.e. involve the principal in the planning of all School Council activities and/or initiatives that will involve or impact upon the school's staff or students);
- ensure diversity in sub-and ad-hoc committees. Every committee of a School Council must include at least one parent member of the council. A committee of a School Council may include persons who are not members of the council.
- facilitate collaborative decision-making;
- ensure that there is regular communication with the school community;
- consult with Superintendent(s) and trustee(s), as appropriate;
- prepare and submit, in order to maintain effective communication, an annual report, including the financial report, to all council members and make it available to all parents. The report will be kept on file at the school and the principal shall share it with the Superintendent of Education, Trustees and Communications Department.

The Chair, in consultation with the council, shall be responsible for making public statements on behalf of the School Council.

The Chair, in consultation with the council, may develop procedures for the rules of order for the meetings.

**c) Other Officers**

A Co-chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and/or Treasurer may be elected, from the council members, if the council so decides.

**d) The Principal**

In compliance with Ontario Regulation 612/00, Section 14.(3), the principal of the school is not entitled to vote in votes taken by the School Council or by a committee of the School Council.

The Principal of the school shall:

- attend all School Council meetings.
- facilitate the establishment of the School Council and assist in its operation;
- support and promote the council's activities;
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies and collective agreements;
- obtain and provide information required by the council to enable it to make informed decisions;
- maintain regular communication with the chair of the council;
- assist the council in communication with the school community;
- encourage the participation of parents, students as appropriate, and other people within the school community;
- approve all printed materials from the School Council distributed through the school as per Peel District School Board policy.
- support an effective liaison among the school, the various organizations within it and the School Council.
- Include a short summary of the School Council's annual report in the school newsletter with a notation that copies of the full report are available upon request.
- Provide for the prompt distribution to each member of the School Council of any materials received by the principal from the Ministry that are identified by the Ministry as being for distribution to the members of School Councils.
- Post any materials distributed to members of the School Council in a location that is accessible to parents.
- Solicit the views of the School Council on:
  - the establishment or amendment of board policies and guidelines that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
  - the development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
  - Board action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of students, and the communication of those plans to the public.

#### 6. Recommendations and Communications of School Councils

- a) Recommendations and decisions of School Councils that are specifically related to the school shall be referred by the Chair to the school principal.
- b) Recommendations and decisions which are broader in scope than the local school may be referred by the Chair either to the school principal for direction or through the principal to the appropriate Board official or Board committee. The Board shall consider each recommendation made to the Board by the council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation in the same way that the Board responds to delegations.
- c) Communications to the community must be reviewed by the principal and the council.
- d) Each council is responsible for setting up its own communication plan.
- e) All communications should be, where necessary, available in the languages of the community.

7. Role of Trustees

School Councils represent a very real opportunity for establishing new relationships and for creating a broadened consensus around the purpose of public education and around student learning as the key focus of schools.

Building relationships and consensus requires support from all partners and a commitment to consultation, collaboration and co-operation. Parents, community members, school administrators and trustees must work together for student success.

School Councils can rely on trustees in many important ways. Trustees can facilitate and support the workings of School Councils by:

- supporting the work of School Councils in the community.
- assisting in the establishing of contacts with the community.
- acting as an additional resource to the council with respect to the sharing and discussion of ideas and proposals.
- being available for consultation and advice on Board policies or on drafting a recommendation for Board consideration.
- providing a communication link and liaison between the council and the Board

School Councils and trustees should feel comfortable about contacting and liaising with each other. School Councils, as part of their overall communication plan, shall support a meaningful School Council/ trustee relationship by sharing meeting dates, agendas and minutes with trustees.

8. Operating Procedures

The Director of Education is authorized to establish operating procedures to support and implement this policy.

**References:** Operating Procedure FINS 1 – Non-Board Funds  
Operating Procedure COMS 6 – School Councils

Approved: April 10, 1996  
Revised: June 26, 1997  
Revised: January 1, 1998 (*to reflect change in Board name*)  
Reviewed: January 2000  
Revised: June 12, 2001  
Reviewed February 25, 2003  
Revised: June 20, 2012  
Reviewed February 25, 2014  
Revised November 13, 2018

## FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

1. The current School Council shall establish a School Council Elections Committee. The Committee must ensure that elections of members shall be held during the first 30 calendar days of the school year.
2. In the case of a new school, the principal shall form and chair an Elections Planning Committee. The committee should have representation from parents, teaching staff, support staff and students (mandatory in secondary schools; in elementary schools, at the discretion of the principal). The Elections Planning Committee will ensure that a School Council is elected within a reasonable time.
3. **Considerations for the School Council Election Process**
  - a. Appeals related to the School Council election process or results shall be resolved by the School Council Elections Committee. If the situation is not resolved, the school principal and the Chair of the outgoing council shall make a ruling.
4. **Election of Parent Representatives**
  - a. Parents/guardians of a student enrolled at the school are eligible both to vote for and to run as a parent representative. Self-nomination will suffice.
    - o No additional qualifiers or quotas may be used to restrict eligibility either to vote for or run as a parent candidate. (For example, child's program, grade, location of home, etc.)
    - o Candidates should be prepared to summarize, to the school community, their reasons for running.
    - o A Board employee is qualified to be a parent representative at any Peel District School Board school where their children are enrolled unless he or she is employed at the same school. If the Board employee is employed elsewhere by the Board, he or she is not qualified unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment.
  - b. [Parent Candidate Nomination forms](#) shall be filed by all candidates for elected positions on the School Council.
  - c. No individual campaign literature for School Council elections may be distributed or posted in the school.
  - d. The principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the ballot position for each candidate.
  - e. Elections for School Council shall be conducted by secret ballot ([School Council Parent Ballot](#)). Voters must be present at the school on the election day(s), during the preset hours (day and evening).
  - f. All eligible voters shall be entitled to cast one vote for each of the candidate positions available at their school. Casting more than the maximum number of

- votes permitted in the category spoils the ballot.
- g. If there is a tie for the final position for a representative on the School Council, the winner shall be determined by lot.
  - h. School resources, both human and material, may not be used to support particular candidates or groups of candidates.
  - i. The election day proceedings shall be supervised by the school principal.
  - j. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, the candidates shall be acclaimed.
  - k. If all elected positions have not been filled at the end of the election process and vacancies exist, the newly constituted School Council should follow the Vacancies in Membership section of this procedure. The principal in consultation with the School Council Elections Committee shall call the first meeting of the School Council within the first 35 school days of the school year.
  - l. The chair of the School Council, who must be a parent, shall be elected by members of the School Council. This election shall occur within thirty (30) days of the first School Council meeting.

#### **5. Election of Staff Representatives**

- a. The principal, in consultation with the Elections Committee, will make the necessary arrangements for staff representatives to be elected.
- b. Anyone assigned to the staff of the school (full or part-time) may be a candidate.
- c. Part-time employees who are assigned to more than one location may only hold one School Council position.

#### **6. Election of Student Representatives**

- a. In consultation with the Elections Committee, the elementary school principal shall determine if there will be a student representative elected to the School Council.
- b. In a secondary school, any student registered (full or part-time) may be a candidate.
- c. The principal in consultation with the Elections Committee and the executive of an existing student council will make the necessary arrangements for election of the student representative.

### **VACANCIES IN MEMBERSHIP**

1. Vacancies occur:
  - a. when positions on the school council have not been filled after election and selections, or
  - b. when a member resigns, or
  - c. when a member is unable to fulfill the roles and responsibilities.
2. If there is a vacancy, the Council may appoint a representative or hold an election to fill the position until the next election.
3. If an executive member resigns from their executive position (Chair, or any other executive position created by the council in their bylaws), then the executive position should be filled by another parent member of council. If more than one member is interested in the position, the council shall select by secret ballot. If the executive member resigns from the council all together, then the executive position should be filled by another parent member of council and the vacant parent member position on council should be filled as described in number 2 above.

4. All appointments to the School Council are by majority vote of the members at the meeting then serving on the School Council. Appointments shall be made at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of the meeting.
5. If appointments or elections fail to fill all positions, the School Council shall continue to function as long as quorum is achieved.

## **PROCEDURE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

### **1. Absence of Chair or Secretary**

- a. The council will appoint an acting chair/secretary for the meeting.

### **2. Quorum**

A meeting of a School Council cannot be held unless,

- a. a majority of the current members of the council are present at the meeting; and
- b. a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.

### **3. Absence of Quorum**

- a. No motions may be considered or approved.
- b. If a majority of parents wish the meeting to proceed in the absence of a quorum, the council will continue the meeting for purposes of discussion of issues.

### **4. Protocol for Decision Making**

- a. Consensus
  - The School Council is advisory in nature, and every attempt should be made to reach consensus.
  - Consensus is a form of group decision-making based on the willingness to consent and support. Consensus is reached when all or most members of the council are willing to accept and support an idea or concept as the best choice.
- b. Motions
  - Any member of the council may make a motion at any meeting, with no seconder required.
  - Each member of a School Council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the council.
  - Each member of a committee of a School Council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the committee.
  - A member of the School Council may abstain from voting on any motion.
  - A motion is approved if a majority of the School Council members present at the meeting vote in favour of it.
  - In compliance with Ontario Regulation 612/00, Section 14.(3), the principal of the school is not entitled to vote in votes taken by the School Council or by a committee of the School Council.

### **5. Public Question Period**

- a. School Council meetings are open to the public.
- b. Each School Council meeting agenda should contain a Public Question Period.
- c. Parents of the school, who are not elected members of School Council, can, at the discretion of the chair and council, participate in dialogue during School Council

- meetings; however, are not able to vote should a vote be required.
- d. Members of the public, who are not community representatives on the School Council and who are not parents of the school, are not able to participate in the dialogue during meetings. Members of the public are able to ask questions during the Public Question Period.
  - e. Members of the public may participate in council dialogue when they have been invited by the council to attend and provide input about a specific topic on the agenda (e.g. settlement service provider in the community who provides information about resources for parents).
  - f. Parents and members of the public attending the meeting, who are not School Council members, can make a [request](#) to the Chair that a particular item be placed on the agenda of a subsequent meeting. The council can support or deny the request at their discretion.

## **SCHOOL COUNCIL BYLAWS**

Each school council shall create bylaws to address dispute resolution, conflict of interest, filling vacancies and the school council election process. School Councils may wish to create additional bylaws, including:

- Code of ethics
- General expectations for meetings
- Membership of council
- Role of the executive
- Committees

School Council bylaws must align with the Education Act and its regulations, Ministry of Education and Training guidelines and Peel District School Board policies, operating procedures and contractual agreements.

School Councils shall review and revise bylaws as needed. Revisions should be reviewed, discussed and approved by council.

## **DISPUTE-RESOLUTION**

### **1. Process**

If at any time four members of the council are of the opinion that the council has become non-productive such that its operation is significantly impaired, they may deliver a written petition signed by them to all council members, and the following will apply:

- a. the chair will call a special meeting of the council;
- b. if a resolution is not reached at the special meeting then the Chair, in consultation with the principal, shall request assistance from the Superintendent of Education.

## **THE SCHOOL COUNCIL'S ADVISORY ROLE AND THE PRINCIPAL**

The Principal shall receive advice from the council as part of the process of making decisions as outlined in section 4 b) of [Board Policy 61](#). In the case where the principal does not accept, School Council with the reasons for the decision.

If a School Council is considering any proposal with respect to construction activities on school property, the Chair should, through the Principal, contact the Facilities Manager for information about procedures and compliance with regulations and Board standards.

If a School Council is considering any proposal with respect to the solicitation of donations, the Chair should, through the Principal, consult the guideline, process guideline for donations or the [Effective Practices, Managing School Finances](#).

## **LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS**

School Councils are to act in an advisory capacity and as a resource to the principal and, when appropriate, to the Board. This contribution is recognized by and covered within the Board's liability insurance which extends coverage to members of School Councils while they are working on behalf of the Board on Board-authorized and approved activities. In the case of school activities, the activity would require the approval of the principal.

## **FUNDING FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS**

Funding will not be provided for School Councils.

## **SCHOOL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT**

The chair of the School Council, no later than September 30th of the following school year, shall submit to the Superintendent of Education, Trustees and the Communications Department, an [annual report](#) which shall include:

- a list of members
- a summary of meeting dates;
- a summary of the council's activities for the past year and may include such other matters that the School Council deems appropriate
- a financial statement summarizing financial transactions that occurred between September 1 and August 31.

## **THE MINISTRY AND SCHOOL COUNCILS**

As part of its accountability to parents, the Ministry shall report annually to members of School Councils on education in the province.

The Ministry may,

- make other reports to members of School Councils; and
- provide information to members of School Councils respecting the roles and responsibilities of School Councils.

## **REVIEW OF BOARD'S POLICY ON SCHOOL COUNCILS**

It is normal practice for the Peel Board to review its policies every four years. However, the Board can review any policy at any time if the Board deems the review to be necessary.

### **REFERENCE**

Education Act, Ontario Regulation 612/00, Section 14.(3)

[Board Policy 61](#)

[Effective Practices, Managing School Finances](#)

[Parent Candidate Nomination forms](#)

[School Council Parent Ballot](#)

96 04 10

97 03 31 Revised

99 08 30 Revised

01 06 12 Revised

10 12 15 Revised

11 11 30 Revised (department name change)

12 05 31 Revised

19 01 15 Revised