

# Everything you need to know about school councils

## Purpose

School councils play an important role in student success. They encourage a strong partnership between the school and the family and help parents become actively involved in the education of their children. School councils help good schools become better.

## School councils are expected to:

- Advise the principal and, where appropriate, the board
- Place the interests of students first
- Support the Peel board’s school success planning goals
- Encourage parent and community involvement in the educational system
- Promote positive attitudes towards public education

## Who can be a member of school council?

Parents or guardians of students enrolled at the school may be a member of the school council. Peel board employees can be parent representatives, unless they are employed at the school attended by their children. Council membership should reflect the diversity of the school community.

## How is a school council organized?

The majority of members on school council must be parents or guardians of students enrolled at the school. School councils will have a minimum of nine members, or eleven members if there are student representatives. Student representatives are required in secondary schools but optional in elementary schools.

## Each school council should include:

<i>Member</i>	<i>Membership process</i>
Parents/guardians.....	elected by parents/guardians
School principal.....	designated member
1 community representative.....	appointed by council
1 teacher.....	elected by teachers
1 support staff member.....	elected by support staff
1 student.....	elected by students
1 PTA or OFHSA representative (if applicable) .....	appointed by PTA or OFHSA

## How to recruit new members

Make school council as visible as possible in the school. Welcome new families and develop strategies to connect with parents from every community group. Let parents know about council meetings and share information about council decisions and activities. Ensure that meetings are informative, efficient and held at convenient times.

## Election

School council elections must be held in the first 30 days of the school year. A person may be a candidate or vote in a school council election if he/she is a parent/guardian of a student enrolled at the school. Parents are elected as parent representatives on council.

An Election Planning Committee should be established in May/June to plan and hold the elections in the fall of the next school year. At least 14 days before the election, the principal will give written notice of the election time, date and location to the school community. Eligible voters may cast one vote for each position.

## Term of office

The term of office for school council members is one year. Elections take place in the fall (within the first 30 days of the school year) and council members remain on council until the first meeting following the next year’s elections.

## What is the role of school council?

School councils advise principals, superintendents and school trustees on educational topics and issues, including:

- School calendar
- Code of behaviour and dress codes
- School program priorities and curriculum delivery
- Budget priorities
- Selection criteria for principals and vice principals
- Extracurricular activities
- School-based services
- Fundraising policies
- Conflict resolution policies
- Planning for improvement
- Board policies, guidelines and new education initiatives that affect student achievement or board accountability to parents

## School council recommendations

The principal must consider all school council recommendations. The school council will be advised of any actions taken in response to those recommendations. The principal may refer recommendations about broader educational issues to the board.

## School council responsibilities

### General

- Establishes and reviews council goals, objectives, action plans and procedures each year
- Holds a minimum of four meetings each year
- Organizes training for council members
- Communicates regularly with parents and the school community
- Keeps minutes of its meetings and records of all financial transactions for four years

### Financial

- Maintains control of all funds raised by school council and advises on all purchases and expenditures made with those funds

### Financial statement

- Prepares an annual financial statement for school council activities conducted for the academic year, from September 1 to August 31 inclusive
- Includes the financial statement in the annual report

### Annual report

- Prepares an annual report summarizing school council activities for the entire academic year, from September 1 to August 31 inclusive
- Submits the annual report, including the annual financial statement, to the principal and the Communications department at the HJA Brown Education Centre no later than September 30 of each year

### Quorum at meetings

A meeting of school council cannot be held unless:

- A majority of the current members are present
- A majority of members present at the meeting are parent members

Without a quorum, issues may be discussed but council cannot consider or approve motions.

### Constitution and bylaws

School councils are not required to have a constitution. In the absence of a constitution, Ontario Regulation 612 acts as the constitution. If a school council does have a constitution, it must align in the regulation. A constitution defines the school council's purpose, explains how council will be structured and describes the rights and responsibilities of council members and executive.

School councils must establish bylaws to guide school council operations and activities. **All school councils must have bylaws to address:**

- Election procedures
- Filling council vacancies
- Conflict of interest
- Conflict resolution

## Responsibilities of school council chair

**Note: a person employed by the board cannot be chair or co-chair of school council**

- Supervises council activities and procedures
- Prepares council agenda and chairs meetings
- Communicates regularly with school principal
- Ensures regular communication between council and school community
- Ensures that fundraising activities and uses of funds comply with board policies and guidelines
- Prepares annual report of school council activities

### Vice-chair – optional

- Assumes the role of the chair when the chair is absent
- Assists the chair, as needed

### Secretary

- Records, maintains and reports accurate minutes of council meetings, including all council decisions
- Ensures minutes are available in school office for review by parents and students
- Acts as corresponding secretary for council

### Treasurer - optional

- Responsible for collecting and recording count sheets for all funds raised by the council
- Responsible for preparing bank deposits and filling out deposit slips for funds received
- Signs the School Council Cheque Requisition Form to indicate that school council expenditures are in accordance with school council approvals
- Enters the HST on the School Council Cheque Requisition Form to enable the secretary to claim the HST rebate
- Agrees the transactions in the category report to School council deposits and School Council Cheque Requisition Forms
- Reviews, signs and dates monthly school council category reports to indicate that transactions have been agreed to deposit slips and School Council Cheque Requisition Forms
- Provides the financial reports at school council meetings, as required
- Prepares annual financial statement for council

### Principal – Note: the principal may not vote at school council or school council committee meetings

- Attends all school council meetings
- Assists and supports school council activities
- May seek advice from school council in areas where council has advisory responsibilities
- Considers council recommendations, informs council of actions taken based on those recommendations
- Communicates regularly with school council chair
- Distributes materials provided by the Ministry of Education and acts as a resource on board and Ministry policies and procedures
- Approves all communication to the school community distributed through the school