



School Council Fact Sheet

History

In February 1994, the government asked the newly created Ontario Parent Council (OPC) to investigate the possible establishment of local school parent councils across Ontario. The OPC's final report recommended that parent participation at the local school level be fostered through an amendment to the Education Act

In its January 1995 report, *For the Love of Learning*, the Royal Commission on Learning acknowledged the importance of parental involvement in Ontario schools and recommended the establishment of "school community councils".

In April 1995, in response to the Commission's recommendation, the Ministry of Education and Training issued *Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 122: School Board Policies on School Councils*, which required boards to develop policies that would establish school councils.

In 1997, the Education Quality Improvement Act mandated that there be school councils in all publicly funded schools in Ontario.

Everything you need to know about school councils

Parental involvement in the education of their children is always encouraged and valued. Catholic School Advisory Councils (CSAC) 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 TCDSB's school success planning goals
- Encourage parent and community involvement in the educational system
- Promote Catholic faith and gospel values.

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, unless they are employed at the school attended by their children. CSAC 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. At the secondary school level, student representatives are required on each council. The participation of elementary school students on their own school councils is also welcome.

Each school council should include:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Membership process</u>
Parents/guardians	elected by parents/guardians
School Principal	designated member
1 or more community representative(s)	appointed by council
1 teacher who is employed at the school	elected by teachers
1 support staff member employed at the school	elected by non-teaching staff
1 student	elected by students
Pastor/Parish designate	designated member

Catholic School Advisory Council Elections

School council elections must be held in the first 30 days of the school year. Members are nominated for a position on the school council executive and elected by membership vote. 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.

Each school establishes an Election Planning Committee to plan and hold the elections. The Principal, in concert with the election committee will notify the local school community of the date, time and location of the election at least 14 days prior to the election. Eligible voters may cast one vote for each vacant position.

Term of office

The normal term of office for elected and appointed school council positions is one year, however members of school council may be re-elected or reappointed for more than one term.

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
- Budget priorities
- Selection criteria for Principals and vice Principals
- School-based services
- Fundraising activities
- Planning for improvement
- Board policies, guidelines and new education initiatives that affect student achievement or Board accountability to parents

School council recommendations

The Principal and the Board take into consideration the school council's recommendations and advise council of any actions taken in response to those recommendations.

The Principal may refer recommendations about broader educational issues to the Board for consideration.



In December 2000, Minister Ecker released Ontario Regulation 612/00, which confirms the advisory role of school councils and clearly states that their purpose is to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. This regulation also clarifies the role of school councils and establishes their right to express their views on any issues that are important to them.

Ontario Regulation 613/00, also released in December 2000, is an amendment to Regulation 298 (Operation of Schools, General). It sets out the duties of principals regarding school councils, in addition to the duties already described in Regulation 298. All references to Regulation 298 in this guide include the amendments contained in Ontario Regulation 613/00. Both regulations, released under the Education Act, require that:

school boards and principals solicit views from school councils and report back to school councils on any advice received;

school boards and school principals across the province consult with and respond to their school councils in a consistent manner.

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CSAC responsibilities

General

- Establishes & reviews council goals, objectives, action plans & procedures annually
- Holds a minimum of four meetings a 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

- Monitors funds raised by school council and advises on purchases and expenditures made with those funds
- Administers school council funds through the school activities funds bank account maintained by the school

Financial statement

- Prepares an annual financial statement for school council activities conducted for the academic year (Sept. 1-Aug. 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 (Sept. 1-Aug. 31 inclusive)
- Submits the annual report, including the annual financial statement, to the Principal and the Board.

Quorum at meetings

A meeting of school council can only be held if: a majority of current members are present and 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

Every school council should have a constitution and bylaws which are subject to TCDSB and Ministry legislation. 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 also establish bylaws to guide school council operations and activities. The bylaws should address election procedures, filling council vacancies, conflict of interest and conflict resolution.

Responsibilities of CSAC Executive:

The **Chair** will call CSAC meetings, prepare agendas and chairs meetings, communicate regularly with school Principal, ensure regular communication between council and school community, ensure that fundraising activities and uses of funds comply with Board policies and guidelines and consult with senior Board staff and trustees, as required .

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

The **Vice-Chair** is an optional role. This individual will assume the role of the Chair when the Chair is absent, and assist the Chair, as needed

The **Secretary** will record, maintain and report accurate minutes of council meetings, including all council decisions and ensure minutes are available in school office for review by parents and students .

The **Treasurer** will receive all funds raised by the council. prepare bank deposits for funds received and submits them for deposit, authorize school council expenditures in accordance with passed resolutions, review, sign and date monthly transaction reports on funds held in the school activity funds bank account, maintain financial records for council and gives financial reports, as required and prepare annual financial statement for council.

The **Principal** attends all school council meetings, assists and supports CSAC activities, requests advice from school council in areas where council has advisory responsibilities, considers council recommendations and informs council of actions taken based on those recommendations, communicates regularly with school council chair and acts as a resource on Board and Ministry policies and procedures .

Note: The Principal is ultimately responsible for the CSAC, and the role is one of collaboration, building bridges and communication. The Principal does not vote at CSAC meetings.
