

Frequently Asked Questions about School Councils

What is the purpose of the school council?

- to improve pupil achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents through the active participation of parents. (Reg.612/2.1).

What are the role and responsibilities of the school council?

- to act as an advisory body, to make recommendations to the principal of the school and/or the Board on any matter; (Reg.612/20)
- to represent and communicate the views of the school community;
- to focus on improved learning for all students;
- to maintain a school-wide perspective on issues;
- to consult with parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council; (Reg.612/613)
- to develop by-laws that govern the council's election procedures, filling of vacancies and conflict resolution process; (Reg.612/5.2)
- to keep minutes of school council meetings and to keep financial records for a period of four years; (Reg.612/16); and
- to produce an annual written report of the council's activities, including financial, to be submitted to the principal and the Board. (Reg. 612/24)

Who are the members of the school council?

- the principal/vice-principal of the school; (Reg. 612/5.1-4)
- elected members, which may include parents, teachers, support staff, and secondary students of the school (elementary students may be included where appropriate); and
- appointed members, which may include community representative(s), and a representative of the Ontario Home and School Association (where such a group exists in the school).

What are the duties and responsibilities of a school council member?

- to attend and contribute regularly at all school council meetings;
- to act as a link between the school council and the community;
- to participate in information and training;
- to follow the operating rules and guidelines established and agreed upon by the school council, including the guidelines for resolving differences of opinion;
- to encourage others within the school community to participate in the activities of the council;

- to communicate with all of the various communities within the school and work to remove any barriers preventing participation by all members of the school community.

What is the term for school council membership?

- Council members are elected and/or appointed for a period of one (1) year. Members may seek additional terms.

What positions make up the school council executive?

- The school council Chair is elected by the school council from among its parent members, to chair meetings, establish a schedule, liaise with the principal, and speak on behalf of the council.
- Additionally, the school council may decide to elect parent member(s) to the positions of co-chair, vice-chair, secretary and/or treasurer.

What is the process for conducting a school council election?

Election planning:

- Each school may form an Election Planning Committee, chaired by the principal and with representation from parents, teaching staff, support staff and, in secondary schools, students.
- The role of the Election Planning Committee is to plan and hold elections for membership of parents, teachers and support staff representatives.
- The responsibilities of the Election Planning Committee include:
 - establishing time(s)/date(s) and location for the election (must include both daytime and evening hours);
 - preparing and distributing election information and notices to the school community;
 - establishing campaign rules/guidelines.

Election procedures:

- the principal shall publicize the Election Day proceedings, on the behalf of the school council, at least fourteen (14) days prior to the election;
- information about candidates shall be made available to the school community at least one week before the election;
- voting shall be done by secret ballot;
- the principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the ballot position of each candidate;
- the principal shall supervise the election day proceedings; and
- the ballots shall be counted by the principal in the presence of at least two (2) parents who are not election candidates.

Election of Parent/Guardian Representatives:

- any parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school may vote in a school council election;
- any parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school may run as a candidate for parent representative on the school council;
- parents/guardians may nominate themselves as candidates by completing the nomination form and returning it to the school;
- parent/guardian candidates should be prepared to provide a summary of their reasons for running to represent the school community;

- parents/guardians must be present at the school on the election day(s), during the preset hours for voting (to include both daytime and evening hours);
- parents/guardians may cast one vote for each candidate;
- if there is a tie for the final position, the winner shall be determined by lot;
- if the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of elected positions, the candidates will be acclaimed;
- if all elected positions are not filled, the school council may appoint additional members or choose to operate with vacancies;
- appointments shall be by majority vote of school council members;
- a school council chair shall be elected within thirty (30) days of the election of parent representatives from among parent members on the council.

Election of Staff Representatives

- The principal shall work with the Election Planning Committee to make arrangements for the election of both teacher and support staff representatives. Any staff member assigned to the school (full or part-time) may be a candidate.

Election of Student Representative

- The principal will work with the Election Planning Committee to determine whether the school council will include a student representative. In secondary schools, any registered student may be a candidate.

Appointment of Community Representative(s)

- All appointments of community representatives to the school council shall be by majority vote held during a meeting of the school council.

*To find out more about school councils,
please contact the
TDSB Parent and Community Involvement Office
416 397-3529*

Every Voice Counts!

Summary of School Council Regulations # 612, # 613 (2001)

The purpose of a school council is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. (Reg. 612/2.1)

A school council may make recommendations to the principal of the school or to the Board on any matter. (Reg. 612/20)

The school council is an advisory body which consists of elected parents, teacher(s), principal/vice principal, support staff, community representative(s), secondary school students, (elementary where appropriate) and a representative from the Ontario Home and School Association, if such a group exists in the school. (Reg. 612/3.8)

RESPONSIBILITIES

The School Council shall:

- Consult with parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council. (Reg. 612/23)
- Develop by-laws that govern election procedures, filling vacancies, a conflict of interest, and a conflict resolution process. (Reg. 612/15.2)
- Keep minutes of meetings and records of financial transactions available at the school for a period of four years, for examination without charge by any person. (Reg. 612/16)
- Produce an annual written report of the council activities, including financial activities, to be submitted to the principal and the Board. (Reg. 612/24)

The Principal shall:

- Act as a resource person to the school council, and assist the council in obtaining information relevant to its functions, including information relating to relevant legislation and policies. (Reg. 613/20)
- Solicit the views of the school council with respect to:
 - School policies and guidelines that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents.
 - A local code of conduct and a local student dress code.
 - New education initiatives that relate to students or to the accountability of the education system to parents.
 - School action plans for improvement based on EQAO results and communication of those plans to the public. (Reg. 613/1-3)
- Consider each recommendation made by the council and advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation. (Reg. 613/18)
- Distribute the school council's annual report to every parent/guardian and post it in an accessible location. (Reg. 613/24.3)
- Distribute materials intended for school councils from the Ministry of Education to school council members and post them in an accessible location. (Reg. 613/12.1)
- Give written notice of the elections to parents at least 14 days before the election and post such notice in an accessible location. (Reg. 612/6 & 7)
- Attend every meeting of the school council. (Reg. 613/3.16)

ELECTIONS

- The chair or co-chair shall be a parent member of the council and shall be elected by council members. (Reg. 612/7.1)

- A person is qualified to be a parent member of a school council if he/she is a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school. (Reg. 612/4.1)
- A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members if he/she is a parent of a student who is enrolled in the school. (Reg. 612/4.3)
- Election of all school council members shall be held during the first 30 days of each school year, with 14 days advance notice. (Reg. 612/4.4 and Reg. 612/12.4)
- Elections of parent members shall be by secret ballot. (Reg. 612/4.8)
- The term of office is one year (members may be re-elected for more than one term). (Reg. 612/6.1)
- A vacancy in the membership of a school council shall be filled by election or appointment, in accordance with the by-laws of the council. (Reg. 612/7.1)
- Teacher member(s) are elected by teachers; support staff are elected by support staff; student members(s) are elected by students; community member(s) are appointed by the council. (Reg. 612/5.1-4)

MEMBERSHIP

- The majority of school council members must be parents/guardians of pupils enrolled in the school. The specific numbers of members in each category are determined by the by-laws. (Reg. 612/3.4 & 4.1)
- Board employees who work at their child's school are not eligible for election as school council parent members in that school (Reg. 612/3.5, 4.2)
- Board employees who stand for school council election as parent members in their child's school (where they do not work), must disclose their employment with the board. (Reg. 612/3.5, 4.2)
- Board employees are not eligible to be chair or co-chair of any school council in that Board. (Reg. 612/8.3)
- A school trustee is not eligible to be a member of a school council. (Reg. 612/3.6)
- Sub-committees may include non-elected members of the school community and must include at least one parent member of the school council. (Reg. 612/13.2-3)

MEETINGS

- The school council shall meet at least four times during the school year to discuss and decide on matters that it has the authority to consider. (Reg. 612/12.1)
- A majority of parents must be present to have a duly constituted meeting of the school council (quorum). (Reg. 612/12.3)
- A newly elected school council shall meet within 35 days of the school year on a date set by the principal. (Reg. 612/12.2)
- Each elected member of the school council is entitled to one vote. Principals are not eligible to vote. (Reg. 612/14.2-3)
- All school council meetings shall be open to the public. (Reg. 612/12.4)

FUNDRAISING

- A school council may engage in fundraising activities (Reg. 612/22.1)
- The fundraising activities of the school council shall be conducted in accordance with applicable Board policies, and for a purpose approved by the Board. (Reg. 612/22.2(A,B))
- **A school council shall not be incorporated. (Reg. 612/17)**