



## ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

### Title: School Councils

**Effective Date:** January 10, 2002

**Responsibility:** Superintendent of Program &  
Schools (Elementary)

**Revised:** May 28, 2003

### 1.0 Rationale

The Near North District School Board recognizes the importance of the partnership of schools, parents/guardians and the community in creating a positive and supportive learning environment for students and recognizes and respects the right as well as the responsibility of parents/guardians to participate in the education of their children and contribute to their children's development.

It is therefore, the responsibility of the Board that each school establishes and maintains a School Council in keeping with the Ministry of Education Regulation 612/00 for School Councils, Regulation 613/00 which amends Regulation 298 for Operation of Schools - General regarding "Duties of Principals".

The major purposes of School Councils are to:

- ◆ increase parental involvement in their children's education, both at home and in school, enhance student learning, improve pupil achievement, and promote the accountability of the education system to parents,
- ◆ enhance communication between school and home,
- ◆ enhance communication between school and the broader community,
- ◆ provide a meaningful advisory role for parents and the community in the education of children,
- ◆ provide parents, staff, students and community members with a forum to learn about and discuss educational issues and programs and community needs,
- ◆ strengthen publicly funded education and advance its cause,

- ◆ provide informed advice and recommendations on any matter to the school principal or to the Board within legislated guidelines (such as the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy* legislation and the *Education Act*), and
- ◆ provide a meaningful forum for parents and members of the broader community to have input into the policies, procedures and practices proposed by the Ministry of Education.

## 2.0. School Council Membership

Parents/guardians shall form the majority of the school council except in adult day schools where parent positions shall be held by students. It is hoped that the membership of the council will reflect the diversity of the school community. All members of the council are equal members.<sup>2</sup>

Membership	Elections/Appointments
<p><b><u>Parent Members:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A person is qualified to be a parent member if he or she is a parent or guardian of a pupil who is enrolled in the school with exceptions as outlined in #2 and #3 below.</li> <li>2. A person is not qualified to be a parent member if he or she is employed at the school.</li> <li>3. A person is not qualified to be a parent member if he or she is employed elsewhere by the Board unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment. “Reasonable steps” shall be specified in the bylaws of the school council.</li> <li>4. The number of parent members of the school council shall not exceed 10 members, unless the school council establishes a bylaw to specify the number of parents, and, in all cases, the number of parent members shall form the majority of the school council members.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members of the school council if he or she is a parent or guardian of a pupil who is enrolled in the school.</li> <li>2) The election of parent members of a school council shall be held during the first 30 calendar days of each school year, on a date that is fixed by the chair or co-chairs of the school council after consulting with the school principal.</li> <li>3) Despite section 2), if a new school is established, the first election of parent members to the school council shall be held during the first 30 calendar days of the school year, on a date that is fixed by the school principal.</li> <li>4) At least 14 days before the date of the election of parent members, the principal shall, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent/guardian of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.</li> <li>5) The notice of the election may be given by giving the notice to the parent’s child for delivery to his or her parent <u>and</u> by posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.</li> <li>6) The election of parent members shall be by secret ballot.</li> </ol>

<sup>2</sup> Revised May 26, 2003

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Elections/Appointments</b>
<b><u>School Principal</u></b>	The school principal is a designated member of the school council.
<b><u>One Teacher:</u></b> The teacher member must be employed at the school and cannot be the principal or vice-principal.	A person is qualified to vote for the teacher member if he or she is a teacher, other than the principal or vice-principal, who is employed at the school.
<b><u>One Non-teaching Staff Member:</u></b> This is a person who is employed at the school, other than the principal, vice-principal or a teacher.	A person is qualified to vote for the non-teaching staff member if he or she is a person, other than the principal, vice-principal or a teacher, who is employed at the school.
<b><u>One Secondary School Student:</u></b> In the case of a school with one or more secondary school grades, there <u>shall</u> be one student member of the school council.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) If the secondary school has a student council, the student council shall appoint the student member.</li> <li>2) If the secondary school does not have a student council, one student member shall be elected by pupils enrolled in the secondary school.</li> </ol>
<b><u>One Elementary School Student:</u></b> In the case of a school with no secondary school grades, there <u>may</u> be one student member of the school council.	The principal may appoint one student if he or she determines, after consulting with the other members of the school council, that the council should include a student.
<b><u>Community Representative(s)</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The school council <u>shall</u> have at least one community representative appointed by the other members of the school council.</li> <li>2) The school council <u>may</u> specify by bylaw that the council shall include two or more community representatives, appointed by the other members of the school council.</li> <li>3) In schools where First Nations students attend under a tuition agreement, the Board and the First Nations Advisory Committee of the Board strongly recommend that a First Nations community representative be appointed.</li> </ol>

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Elections/Appointments</b>
<b><u>One Association Member</u></b>	If an official Ontario Federation of Home and School Association is established in respect of the school, that school association has the right to appoint one person to the school council.

### **3.0 Remuneration**

- 3.1 No person shall receive any remuneration for serving as a member or officer of a school council.
- 3.2 The Board policy respecting the reimbursement of members and officers of school councils for expenses they incur as members or officers of the council is as follows:
  - 3.2.1 Allowable expenses are defined as those expenditures pre-authorized by the Principal.
  - 3.2.2 Reimbursements will be limited in total to Board monies identified for school council expenses by the Ministry of Education.

### **4.0 Term Of Office**

- 4.1 The person elected or appointed to the school council holds office from the later of,
  - a] the date he or she is elected or appointed, and
  - b] the date of the first meeting of the school council after the elections in the current school year, until the date of the first meeting of the school council after the elections in the next school year.
- 4.2 A member of a school council may be re-elected or re-appointed, unless otherwise provided by the bylaws of the council.

### **5.0 Vacancies**

- 5.1 A vacancy in the membership of a school council shall be filled by election or appointment in accordance with the bylaws of the council.
- 5.2 If an election is held to fill a vacancy in the membership of a school council, Section 1 of these regulations applies with any necessary modifications, to the election.
- 5.3 A vacancy in the membership of the school council does not prevent the council from exercising its authority.

### **6.0 Officers**

- 6.1 The school council shall have a chair or, if the bylaws of the council so provide, two co-chairs.
- 6.2 The chair or co-chairs must be parent members of the council, and shall be elected by the members of the council.
- 6.3 A person who is employed by the Board cannot be the chair or co-chair of the council.
- 6.4 The school council may have such other officers as are provided for in the bylaws of the council.
- 6.5 Subject to subsections 5.2 and 5.3 above, vacancies in the office of chair, co-chair or any other officer of a school council shall be filled in accordance with the bylaws of the council.

## **7.0 Meetings**

- 7.1 The school council shall meet at least four times during the school year.
- 7.2 The school council shall meet within the first 35 calendar days of the school year, after the elections are held, on a date fixed by the principal of the school.
- 7.3 A school council meeting cannot be held unless:
  - 7.3.1 majority of the current members of the council are present at the meeting;
  - and
  - 7.3.2 a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.
- 7.4 All school council meetings shall be open to the public.
- 7.5 The school council is entitled to hold its meetings at the school.
- 7.6 All meetings of a school council shall be held at a location that is accessible to the public.
- 7.7 The principal shall, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the meetings of the council to every parent/guardian of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.
- 7.8 The notice required in section 6.7 may be given by,
  - 7.8.1 giving the notice to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and
  - 7.8.2 posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.

## **8.0 Committees**

- 8.1 The school council may, in accordance with its bylaws, establish committees to make recommendations to the council.
- 8.2 Every committee of a school council must include at least one parent member of the council.
- 8.3 A committee of a school council may include persons who are not members of the council.
- 8.4 Policy subsections 6.4 to 6.8 apply, with necessary modifications, to committees of school councils.

## **9.0 Voting**

- 9.1 The principal/designate of the school is not entitled to vote in votes taken by the school council or by a committee of the school council.
- 9.2 With the exception of the principal/designate, each member of a school council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the council or by a committee of the school council.

## **10.0 Bylaws**

- 10.1 The school council may make bylaws governing the conduct of its affairs. The council should consider having bylaws to address:
  - 10.1.1 naming of officers and outlining their duties for the school council, inclusive of the chair or co-chairs
  - 10.1.2 procedures for filling vacancies among officers of the council number of meetings during the school year
  - 10.1.3 compliance with Board policy and administrative guidelines related to school councils and with rules for conflict of interest
  - 10.1.4 establishment of committees of the school council and their operating guidelines
  - 10.1.5 procedures for communicating with parents of pupils enrolled in the school

- 10.1.6 procedures for fundraising that comply with Board administrative guidelines
- 10.1.7 procedures for the development of school council agendas
- 10.1.8 other procedures as deemed appropriate by the school council
- 10.2 Every school council shall make the following bylaws:
  - 10.2.1 a bylaw that governs election procedures and the filling of vacancies in the membership of the school council.
  - 10.2.2 a bylaw that establishes rules respecting participation in school council proceedings in cases of conflict of interest.
  - 10.2.3 a bylaw that, in accordance with any applicable policies or administrative guidelines established by the Board, establishes a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.

### **11.0 Minutes and Financial Records**

- 11.1 The school council shall keep minutes of all of its meetings and records of all its financial transactions.
- 11.2 The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person.
- 11.3 Subsections 10.1 and 10.2 do not apply to minutes and records that are more than four years old.
- 11.4 The school council shall ensure that the principles and parameters of all Near North policies and administrative guidelines are applicable to the finances and Financial transactions of the school council. Among the specific administrative guidelines to be followed and/or adapted to school council finances are: Purchasing, Fundraising and Non-Board Fund Accounting.

### **12.0 Incorporation**

- 12.1 A school council shall not be incorporated.

### **13.0 Role and Responsibilities of the School Council**

- 13.1 Schools Councils are advisory bodies. A School Council may provide advice to the school principal and to the school board on any matters. The following list suggests some matters that the Council may wish to address and to provide recommendations or advice to the principal or to the Board.
  - local school year calendar
  - school code of student behaviour
  - curriculum and program goals and priorities
  - the responses of the school or school board to achievement in national, provincial and board assessment programs
  - preparation of the school profiles and school improvement plans
  - input on criteria for the selection of principals
  - school budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans
  - school/community communications strategies
  - methods of reporting to parents and the community
  - co-instructional activities in the school
  - school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational and nutrition programs
  - community use of school facilities
  - local coordination of services for children and youth
  - development, implementation and review of board policies at the local level

- 13.2 School councils will not deal with matters such as: the legal liability issues of the Board; personnel matters involving efficiency, discipline, termination of employment, extension of employment beyond retirement age and medical reports; Board negotiations for the purchase, lease or other acquisition of properties; negotiation of wage schedules of employees; and matters concerning individual staff members or students.
- 13.3 In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the School Council should:
- establish its goals, priorities and procedures
  - organize information and training sessions to enable members of the Council to develop their skills as council members
  - communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the Council and to report on the activities of the Council to the school community
  - promote the best interests of the school community
  - supervise the election procedures for School Councils

#### **14 0. Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members**

- 14.1 The Chair of the School Council shall take the following and other actions as provided for in Board guidelines and/or the bylaws of the school council:
- call School Council meetings
  - prepare and circulate the agenda for School Council meetings in consultation with the principal and with the principals assistance
  - chair School Council meetings
  - ensure that the minutes of School Council meetings are recorded and maintained
  - participate in information and training programs
  - communicate with the school principal
  - ensure that there is regular communication with the school community
  - consult with senior board staff and trustees, as required, and
  - ensure that an annual, written report of the school council's activities is prepared and submitted to the principal and to the Director of Education. If the school council engaged in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.
- 14.2 The members of the school council may take the following and/or other actions as provided for in the bylaws of the school council:
- 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 from all groups and of other people within the school community
  - provide informed advice to the school principal and the Board on any matter
  - maintain a school-wide perspective on issues
- 14.3 The school council may engage in fundraising activities in accordance with Board policies and/or guidelines for a purpose approved by, or authorized by, the Board.



The school council shall ensure that the funds raised by it are used in accordance with Board policy and/or guidelines.

14.4 The school council shall consult with parents of pupils enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council.

14.5 The principal of the school shall:

- make the names of members of the school council known to the parents of the pupils enrolled in the school, by publishing those names in a school newsletter or by such other means as is likely to bring the names to the attention of the parents not later than 30 days following the election of parent members of the school council
- attend every meeting of the school council, unless he or she is unable to do so by reason of illness or other cause beyond his or her control
- delegate any of his or her powers or duties as a member of the school council to a vice-principal of the school as he or she deems appropriate
- act as a resource person to the school council and assist the council in obtaining information relevant to the functions of the school council, including information relating to relevant legislation, regulations, and policies
- obtain and provide information required by the council to enable it to make informed decisions
- consider each recommendation made to the principal by the school council and advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation
- in addition to his or her other obligations to solicit the views of the school council under the Act and the Regulations, solicit the views of the school council with respect to the following matters:
  - the establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
    - ✓ a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
    - ✓ school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the Board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in school
  - the development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
    - ✓ implementation plans for a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
    - ✓ implementation plans related to policies and guidelines established by the Board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in school
  - school action plans for improvement, based on the EQAO reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public
  - other matters on which the school principal may wish to solicit the views of the school council
- communicate with the chair of the council, as required
- ensure that copies of the minutes of the council's meetings and the council's financial records are kept at the school

- 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, and post those same materials in the school in a location that is accessible to parents
- provide for the posting of any materials received by the principal from the Board that are identified by the Board as being for the information of members of the school council, and ensuring that the materials are posted in a location that is known and accessible to parents
- assist the council in communicating with the school community, by, among other measures, giving a copy of the school council's annual report to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the copy is given, is enrolled in the school. The report will be given to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent, and will be posted in the school in a location that is accessible to parents
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community.

#### **15.0 The Near North District School Board**

- 15.1 The Board will maintain a policy and procedures regarding the establishment of school council forums to facilitate communication between the Board and the school councils.
- 15.2 The Board will consult with school councils on matters related to the purpose of school councils, consider their recommendations, and report back to them on how their advice has been taken into account.
- 15.3 The Board shall consider each recommendation made to the Board by a school council and shall advise the school council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.
- 15.4 The Board will consult with school councils in the development, amending and implementation of policies or administrative guidelines inclusive of but not limited to:
- 15.1.1 pupil achievement or accountability of the school system to parents
  - 15.1.2 code of conduct for all persons in its schools
  - 15.1.3 appropriate dress for students
  - 15.1.4 process and criteria for the selection and placement of principals and vice-principals
  - 15.1.5 allocation of funding for school councils
  - 15.1.6 fundraising
  - 15.1.7 conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes
  - 15.1.8 reimbursement of expenses for school council members, and
  - 15.1.9 action plans for improvement based on EQAO reports on results of tests.
- 15.5 A report on the operation of the School Councils shall be included in the Annual Report of the Director of Education.

#### **16.0 Ministry of Education**

- 16.1 The Ministry may, for the purpose of consulting and communicating directly with members of school councils, collect the names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of the chair or co-chairs of the school council and of the other members of school councils.

- 16.2 The Ministry may disclose information collected under subsection 15.1 to the Ontario Parent Council, which may use the information for the purpose of consulting and communicating directly with members of school councils.
- 16.3 The Ministry shall report annually to members of school councils on education in the province.
- 16.4 The Ministry may make other reports to school councils and provide information to members of school councils respecting the roles and responsibilities of school councils.

**17.0 Transition**

- 17.1 Every school council currently in place for the school year 2000-2001 is continued.
- 17.2 The first annual school council report to the Director of Education is due in June 2001. This report includes descriptors of the council's general activities and any fundraising activities.
- 17.3 Requirements for elections of school council members and the composition of School councils, as described in this document, will come into effect in September 2001.