

# AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

### NO. 113

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## **SUBJECT: SCHOOL COUNCILS**

Legal References: *Education Act: Section 265 Duties of the Principal; Section 283 Chief Executive Officer; Section 286 Duties of Supervisory Officers, Sections 302-303 Behavior, Discipline and Safety—Consider Views of School Councils Ontario Regulation 298—Operation of Schools Section 11(12) to (20) Duties of Principals: School Councils; Ontario Regulation 612/00 School Councils Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 122 School Councils; Ministry of Education: School Councils: A Guide for Members. Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Information for School Councils Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario Act and Regulations*

Related References: *Board Policy No. 3 Director of Education Job Description; “Communication Guidelines for Board Members” in Board Policy No. 6 Role of the Trustee; Administrative Procedure 103 Management of Personal Information – Student; AP 116 Partnerships, Acknowledgements, Advertising and Corporate Recognition; AP 160 Access to School Premises; AP 195 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy; AP 321 Fund-Raising; AP 322 Partnerships and Advertising in Schools; AP 513 Accounts: School Generated Funds*

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## **1. Purposes of School Councils**

- 1.1 The director of education believes that relationships between schools and their communities can be enhanced through the establishment of local School Councils. The School Councils serve as an ongoing mechanism for effective communication and consultation among system leaders, the staff in each school, the school community, the board and the Ministry of Education.
- 1.2 The mandate of the School Council is to give advice and report recommendations to the school administration and, on occasion, to the director of education and the board, relating to matters affecting the school.
- 1.3 The main purposes of School Councils are as follows:
  - 1.3.1 To promote student academic success;
  - 1.3.2 To increase parental involvement in schools to promote greater understanding of the education process;
  - 1.3.3 To enhance the accountability of the education system;
  - 1.3.4 To provide parents, staff, students and community members with a forum to learn about education and community needs;
  - 1.3.5 To provide a meaningful advisory role for parents and the community; and
  - 1.3.6 To enhance communication and foster partnerships among parents, communities, teachers and administrators.

## **2. Implementation**

- 2.1 Each school in Avon Maitland District School Board shall establish a School Council.
- 2.2 The district is committed to providing, within its means, the resources necessary for an effective partnership between parents and schools.

- 2.3 It is expected that the School Councils will operate under this administrative procedure and that each School Council shall develop a constitution or by-laws based on the procedural guidelines contained in this document.

### **3. Definitions**

In this administrative procedure:

- a) All references to “the board” refer to Avon Maitland District School Board.
- b) “Parent” includes a guardian as defined in Section 1 of the *Education Act*.
- c) “Parent member” means a member of School Council who is elected to the School Council in accordance with the terms of this procedure, or who fills a vacancy created when a parent member ceases to hold office.

### **4. Role of the School Council**

- 4.1 The following areas are those where School Councils are asked to provide advice. The list is not exclusive:

- a) The calendar of school activities, and input into the board’s annual school year calendar;
- b) The school code of conduct as prescribed by the Ministry of Education in the *Education Act Part XIII—Behavior, Discipline and Safety*;
- c) Student dress code;
- d) Curriculum and program goals and priorities;
- e) Responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and board assessment programs;
- f) Preparation of the school profile;
- g) Preparation of an administrative profile to be used in selection of principals;
- h) School budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans;
- i) School/community communication strategies;
- j) Methods of reporting to parents and the community;
- k) Co-curricular activities in the school;
- l) School-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs;
- m) Community use of school facilities;
- n) Local coordination of services for children and youth; and/or
- o) The development, implementation, and review of board policies or administrative procedures at the local level, e.g., Safe Schools, Antiracism and Ethno cultural Equity.

- 4.2 School Councils always operate in a public forum, except for meetings held in accordance with the Conflict Resolution Guideline (Section 19). School Councils may not discuss any individual staff or student matters.

### **5. Responsibilities of the School Council**

- 5.1 In addition to its advisory role, each School Council shall:
- a) Establish its constitution, goals, priorities and procedures, and review these annually; [See Appendix A]
  - b) Organize an information and training session to enable members of the School Council to develop their skills as School Council members;
  - c) Hold a minimum of four meetings per year; (All meetings shall be open to members of the school community, except for meetings held in accordance with the Conflict Resolution Guideline set out in Section 19)
  - d) Communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the School Councils, and to report on the activities of the School Council to the school community;
  - e) Promote the best interests of the school community;

- f) Encourage a positive and co-operative team approach;
  - g) Encourage parental involvement in the day to day activities of their children;
  - h) Develop partnerships with other sectors of the community;
  - i) Co-operate and provide assistance to other related school groups, e.g., Parent Associations, Home and School Associations, Student Councils, etc.;
  - j) Address the social environment of the school; and
  - k) Respect the right to privacy of students, staff and parents.
- 5.2 School Council may engage in fund-raising activities if this fits with the goals and priorities of the group, subject to the terms of Section 5.2.1.

A school council shall not engage in fund-raising activities unless,

- a) The activities are conducted in accordance with Administrative Procedure 321 Fund-Raising, and any related administrative procedures, as established by the director of education; and
- b) The activities are to raise funds for a purpose approved by the director or authorized by any applicable procedures established by the director. [See Appendix B]

## 6. Representation and Membership

- 6.1 The membership of a School Council shall be elected or appointed, as appropriate, from all parents or guardians of students in the school, the school principal, students (optional in elementary schools), teaching and support staff, plus appointed community members.
- 6.2 In Avon Maitland District School Board, the School Council membership shall include, as a minimum the following eleven members:
- 6.2.1 6 parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school;
  - 6.2.2 At least 1 community representative (e.g. representative of individuals and groups without students in the school, including senior citizens, business people, professionals);
  - 6.2.3 1 student (mandatory in secondary schools; optional in elementary schools based on decision of the principal in consultation with the School Council);
  - 6.2.4 1 school principal;
  - 6.2.5 1 member of the teaching staff of the school, other than the principal or vice-principal; and
  - 6.2.6 1 member of the school-based support staff who is employed at the school, other than the principal, vice-principal or any other teacher.
- 6.3 Councils may choose to become larger for a variety of reasons, such as to accommodate additional community representatives. However, parents and guardians must always be in the majority on the council.
- 6.4 The members of the council will be the decision-makers. However, the public may attend regular School Council meetings. As well, committees may be established as needed. Such committees must include at least one parent representative on the School Council.
- 6.5 A person who is employed by the board that established the School Council cannot serve as a parent representative at any public school where that employee's children are enrolled.
- 6.6 A person who is employed elsewhere by the board cannot be appointed as a representative on the School Council unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment.

- 6.7 A member of a board cannot be a member of a School Council established by the board.
- 6.8 If all elected positions have not been filled at the end of the election process and vacancies exist, the newly constituted School Council shall appoint the necessary number of eligible persons to serve for the balance of the term of office. If appointments fail to fill all positions, the School Council shall proceed to operate as long as a parent majority exists. The following year, all unfilled positions will again be promoted to the community at large.

## 7. Election of Members

Membership in the School Council shall be determined in the following ways:

- a) Parents and guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school.
- b) The chair of the council shall be a member who is a parent and who is not a board employee and shall be elected by the council.
- c) The community representative shall be appointed by the council.
- d) The student representative shall be appointed by the students.
- e) The school principal shall be a designated member.
- f) The teacher representative shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
- g) The school-based support staff member shall be elected by members of the school-based support staff.

## 8. Election and Appointment Guidelines

- 8.1 Each school shall hold its annual election during the first 30 calendar days of each school year. **See Form 113 School Council Candidate Nomination Form.**
- 8.2 The principal of a school shall, at least 14 calendar days before the date of the election of parent members, on behalf of the School Council, give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.
- 8.3 The selection process must be organized by the retiring council and the school principal in such a way as to ensure that all parents, students and staff members have the opportunity to participate in the election of identified representatives. It is the responsibility of the principal of the feeder schools or of the receiving schools as appropriate, to inform all parents of the election procedures and the parents' rights to stand for election.
- 8.4 Election proceedings shall be supervised by the school principal (or designate).
- 8.5 The principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the randomly selected ballot position for each candidate.
- 8.6 Elections for School Council shall be conducted by secret ballot. Neither proxy nor absentee voting is permitted. Voters must be present at the school on the Election Day and must vote in person.
- 8.7 A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members of School Council if he or she is a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school.
- 8.8 Ballots will be counted and certified by the school principal and the School Council chair.
- 8.9 Ballots should be kept safely for a period of four weeks following the election in order to allow for a recount, if required, after which time the ballots shall be shredded.

- 8.10 Ties will be determined by lot.
- 8.11 Appeals related to the School Council election shall be resolved by the School Council's *ad hoc* Elections Committee.
- 8.12 No individual campaign literature for School Council elections shall be distributed from or posted in the school. School resources, both human and material, may not be used to support particular candidates or groups of candidates except where a candidate forum night is held.
- 8.13 All appointments to the School Council are to be made by consensus. Appointments shall occur at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of this meeting made in advance.
- 8.14 The principal shall call the first meeting of the new School Council within 35 calendar days of the start of the school year.

## **9. Term of Office**

- 9.1 A person elected or appointed as a member of a School Council holds office from the latter of:
  - a) The date he or she is elected or appointed; and
  - b) The date of the last meeting of the School Council before the elections
  - c) Until the date of the first meeting of the School Council after the elections held in the next school year.
- 9.2 A member of School Council may be re-elected or reappointed, unless otherwise provided by the by-laws of the School Council.
- 9.3 Elections shall be held annually. If a member resigns his or her position, that position will be filled by someone elected or appointed by the council until the designated election time for that particular school.
- 9.4 There will be no honorarium paid to members of the School Council.

## **10. Members and their Duties**

### **10.1 Chair**

The chair of the School Council shall:

- a) Call School Council meetings;
- b) Prepare the agenda for School Council meetings, in consultation with the principal;
- c) Chair School Council meetings;
- d) Ensure that the minutes of School Council meetings are recorded, maintained and distributed;
- e) Participate in information and training programs;
- f) Communicate with the principal;
- g) Ensure that there is regular communication with the school community; and
- h) Consult with senior board staff and trustees, as required.

### **10.2 Vice-Chair**

The vice-chair will assume the duties of the chair as appropriate.

### **10.3 Council Members**

The members of the School Council shall:

- a) Participate in School Council meetings;

- b) Participate in information and training programs;
- c) Act as a link between the School Council and the community; and
- d) Encourage the participation of all parents and of other people within the school community.

#### 10.4 The Principal

##### 10.4.1 The principal of the school shall:

- a) Facilitate the establishment of the School Council and assist in its operation;
- b) Support and promote the School Council's activities;
- c) Act as a resource on laws, regulations, board policies, administrative procedures and collective agreements;
- d) Obtain and provide information required by the School Council to enable it to make informed decisions;
- e) Communicate with the chair of the School Council, as required;
- f) Ensure that copies of the minutes of the School Council's meetings are kept at the school; (The official record of the School Council agenda and minutes of the meetings will be securely maintained in the school office.)
- g) Assist the School Council in communicating with the school community;
- h) Encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community;
- i) Assist the chair of the School Council in agenda preparation: and
- j) Seek input from the School Council in areas for which it has been assigned advisory responsibility as set out in *Ontario Regulation 298—Operation of Schools, Section 11* and *Ontario Regulation 612/00 School Councils*.

##### 10.4.2 The principal's duties related to solicitation of the views of the School Council are described in *Ontario Regulation 298—Operation of Schools* as follows:

###### **S. 11 (18)**

The principal of a school shall consider each recommendation made to the principal by the school council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.

###### **S. 11 (19)**

In addition to his or her other obligations to solicit the views of the school council under the *Act* and the regulations, the principal of a school shall solicit the views of the school council with respect to the following matters:

1. 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,
  - i) A local code of conduct established under subsection 303(1) or (2) of the *Act* governing the behavior of all persons in the school, and
  - ii) School policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board under subsection 302(5) of the *Act* respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
2. 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,

- i) Implementation plans for a local code of conduct established under subsection 303(1) or (2) of the *Act* governing the behavior of all persons in the school, and
  - ii) Implementation plans for school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board under subsection 302 (5) of the *Act* respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
3. School action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public.

#### **10.5 Community Representative**

The community representative shall:

- a) Have the same responsibilities as other School Council members; and
- b) Not have children attending the school.

### **11. Remuneration and Expenses**

- 11.1 No financial remuneration is provided for any member of School Council for his or her work as a member of the council.
- 11.2 The board that established a School Council may reimburse members and officers of the School Council in accordance with Administrative Procedure 513 Accounts – School Generated Funds, for expenses they incur as members or officers of the School Council, provided grants specific to this purpose are received from the Ministry of Education.
- 11.3 This does not preclude the board from providing resources and training for School Council members.

### **12. School Council Procedures**

- 12.1 At the first meeting of the school year, the School Council shall elect a parent member who is not a board employee to serve as chair. (Co-Chairs may be chosen.)
- 12.2 Also, at the first meeting each year, the School Council shall elect a vice-chair and a secretary who are not board employees. School councils have found it to be an effective practice for the vice-chair to succeed to the chair position, having had experience beneficial to the role, and this should be addressed in the constitution.
- 12.3 The School Council will prepare and publicize a set of operational bylaws that guide its activities (i.e., constitution).
- 12.4 Constitutions shall be reviewed yearly to ensure that they effectively meet the needs of the school community and are in line with current legislation.
- 12.5 A meeting of School Council cannot be held unless a majority of the current members of the council are present at the meeting and a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.
- 12.6 School Council shall keep minutes of all of its meetings and records of all of its financial transactions. The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person. (This does not apply to minutes and records that are more than four years old.)

- 12.7 Committees may be established by the School Council to carry out specific functions. These committees must include at least one parent member of the School Council itself.
- 12.8 The School Council will operate in a manner that is non-judgmental, is based on open discussion and uses consensus, collaboration and compromise as the usual method for developing recommendations and plans.
- 12.9 School council members must respect confidentiality. At no time will the School Council deal with confidential student or personnel issues.
- 12.10 The School Council will communicate with the school and parent community through such means as newsletters, meetings and activities.
- 12.11 The School Council chair and principal are responsible for collaboratively preparing the agenda for each meeting. A final written agenda will be prepared and distributed by the chair to all School Council members at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting. All School Council members shall receive copies of the minutes, which have been reviewed by the chair and principal prior to distribution.
- 12.12 School Council members are encouraged to attend at least one meeting of Avon Maitland District School Board during the year.
- 12.13 The School Council must respect the roles of the school staff in their school.
- 12.14 School Councils do not involve themselves directly in determining professional practices. The teachers use their professional judgment to plan instruction for the students.
- 12.15 The day-to-day running of the school is the responsibility of the principal.
- 12.16 School staffing is the responsibility of the director of education.
- 12.17 On an annual basis, each School Council shall evaluate its activities, discuss accomplishments and set priorities as mandated by the Ministry of Education. This evaluation is included in written form in the annual district newsletter of the School Council Liaison Committee.

### **13. Conduct of Meetings**

School Council meetings shall be held in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 13.1 There will be a minimum of four meetings per year and the School Council shall publicize these dates, times and locations.
- 13.2 All meetings shall be open to the public, except for meetings held in accordance with the Conflict Resolution Guideline.
- 13.3 Agenda items are to have a school-wide focus on all issues. School Council meetings are not a forum for discussion about individual parents, students, staff, trustees or other council members.
- 13.4 A meeting of a School Council cannot be held unless:
  - a) A majority of the current members of the council are present; and
  - b) A majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.
- 13.5 Decision-making is to be done by consensus.
- 13.6 Meeting times are to be set by the individual School Councils.



## **14. Agenda Guidelines**

### **14.1 Opening:**

Chair brings meeting to order and opens with a welcome. The chair can ask a member to prepare a “thought for the day” to set the tone for the meeting.

### **14.2 Roll Call:**

Secretary keeps a record of:

- a) Those present;
- b) Those absent without notification; and
- c) Those who sent regrets.

### **14.3 Minutes of last meeting:**

“Are there any errors or omissions?” Errors are corrected and omissions are inserted. Minutes are then declared “approved as printed” or “approved as corrected”.

### **14.4 Financial Statement**

### **14.5 Business Arising From Minutes:**

This item will deal with ongoing business. Those matters to be discussed are listed.

### **14.6 Report of a staff person**

### **14.7 Reports of members with special task assignments**

### **14.8 Visitor or speaker, if any**

### **14.9 New Business:**

List those matters, which are to be discussed for the first time.

### **14.10 Correspondence - if any**

### **14.11 Date of Next Meeting**

### **14.12 Announcements or memos (coming events)**

### **14.13 Adjournment**

Chair asks, “Is there any further business to come before the meeting at this time?”  
Chair declares the meeting adjourned.

## **15. Guidelines for Minutes**

15.1 State whether the meeting is a regular meeting or one called for a specific purpose.

15.2 Give the name of the School Council and the time, date and place of the meeting.

15.3 Use a consistent format for all School Council minutes.

15.4 State the name and position of the person chairing the meeting.

15.5 Note whether minutes of the last meeting were approved or not.

- 15.6 List names of members: who are present, absent but sent regrets, absent without notification.
- 15.7 State names of guests and where they are from.
- 15.8 Note any committee reports that were presented. If there were committee reports, a written copy should be recorded in the minutes.
- 15.9 Record discussion on former business and new business.
- 15.10 State all motions or recommendations made and whether they were accepted or rejected.
- 15.11 Give names of people making motions and the name of the person who seconds each motion.
- 15.12 Summarize the discussion of each recommendation.
- 15.13 Record any announcements made.
- 15.14 Record what happened at the meeting after former and new business was conducted—for example, if there were speakers or presenters.
- 15.15 State the time when the meeting ended.
- 15.16 Have the secretary or recorder sign the minutes.
- 15.17 The official record of the agenda and minutes of the meetings of the School Council will be securely maintained in the school office.

***[Better Meetings: A Handbook for Trainers of Policy Councils and Other Decision-Making Groups, by Carol S. Hoge, Humanics Press, 1975.]***

## **16. School Council Members Code of Conduct**

### **16.1 School Council Commitments**

School Councils in Avon Maitland District School Board commit themselves to:

- a) Involve parents and to create an aware and informed community;
- b) Practice integrity and honesty at all times in words and actions;
- c) Respect others—their ideas, opinions and suggestions;
- d) Support the group in achieving stated goals and action plans;
- e) Co-operate, communicate, and be willing to compromise;
- f) Achieve a consensus;
- g) Show courtesy to all;
- h) Discuss one matter at a time;
- i) Honor the principles of democracy;
- j) Develop skills in problem-solving and conflict resolution;
- k) Agree on the ground rules for conflict resolution;
- l) Remember the overall purpose of the School Council, which is to give the principal and Avon Maitland District School Board advice when and where appropriate, on matters which improve the school and its services;
- m) Work in harmony with other parent organizations (e.g. Home and School Associations);
- n) Respect the powers and duties reserved by laws or regulations for the local board, the director of education, the principal and the collective agreements; (These areas cannot be part of the School Council's mandate) and
- o) Promote excellence.

## 16.2 Protocol for Decision-Making

School Councils operate under the following understandings:

- a) Every School Council shall be advisory in nature.
- b) Every attempt should be made to reach consensus.
- c) Consensus is a form of group decision-making based on the willingness to consent and support, rather than having a winning and losing side by voting. Consensus is reached when all members of the School Council are willing to accept and support an idea or concept as the best choice for the entire School Council—keeping in mind that students come first. It allows ownership of ideas by all School Council members.
- d) Consensus is a decision process for resolving conflicts. Consensus may be difficult to reach, as not every decision will meet with everyone's complete approval.
- e) Consensus is finding a proposal acceptable enough that all members can support it; no member opposes it.
- f) Consensus is not a unanimous vote, because a consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities.
- g) Consensus is not a majority vote, because in a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority may get something they don't want at all, which is not what consensus is all about.
- h) Consensus does not mean that everyone is totally satisfied.
- i) Consensus requires time, the active participation of all group members, skills in communication (listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation), creative thinking and open-mindedness.

## 16.3 Steps in Building Group Consensus

The steps in building consensus are outlined as follows:

- a) The facilitator clarifies the task ahead, member roles needed, and the consensus process.
- b) Each person states views and perspectives while others listen. No solutions are suggested at this point.
- c) Everyone helps the group find common ground and areas of disagreement.
- d) Volunteers offer solutions incorporating the viewpoints that have been heard.
- e) Everyone helps weigh pros and cons of each solution proposed.
- f) New solutions, variations of those on the table, and other fresh insights are offered and discussed.
- g) The facilitator elicits consensus from each group member about the most promising solution, asking each, "Can you live with this?" [If 100% of the members are not in agreement, the group takes a break and then begins anew with Step # (c).]

***[Source: Tools for Change Workshops. National Staff Development Council 1993]***

## 16.4 Code of Ethics for School Council Members

16.4.1 *As partners in Avon Maitland District School Board, we will seek truth, be honest, show compassion and maintain confidentiality. We will achieve these ideals by:*

- a) *Respecting ourselves and others;*
- b) *Caring for property; and*
- c) *Being active citizens of our school community and beyond.*

16.4.2 *We will commit ourselves to balancing the needs of the whole community with the needs of the individual. In doing so, we will be accountable for our decisions and actions.*

## 16.5 Mission Statement for School Councils

The board's mission statement is "Engage, Inspire, Innovate...Always Learning." Individual School Councils may wish to develop a mission statement specific to the operation and function of the School Council, provided that it does not conflict with the board's mission statement.

## 17. Media Relations for School Councils

- 17.1 Reporters are attracted to stories with a human angle, events with a twist, or with colour. What may seem important to School Council members may not be considered of importance to a reporter. The council must hook the reporter's interest with proper presentation and an interesting story angle.
- 17.2 Council members, in consultation with the principal, can ask these questions to determine if a story is newsworthy:
- Is it an interesting event?
  - Does it have mass appeal?
  - Who are the media contacts?
  - What is the best method of contact?
- 17.3 It is important to develop local knowledge. Which newspapers serve the school community? Which radio stations or television stations would be interested in happenings at the school?
- 17.4 **School Council members can plan strategic messages by:**
- Analyzing the key facts;
  - Combining facts into short sentences;
  - Practicing for an announcement or interview;
  - Repeating strategic messages—for example, about the time and place of a special event;
  - Reinforcing the positive news about school events or achievements.
- 17.5 The principal of the school should always be designated as the first contact when members of the news media are seeking information about the school or school event. However, the School Council chair is also considered an important media contact and should maintain a strong communication link with the principal for purposes of contacting and being contacted by members of the news media about special events in the school. If a School Council member is unable to answer a reporter's question about a school event, or considers the question more appropriate for the principal, the council member should indicate that the principal will provide the answer.
- 17.6 School Council members should not complain if a particular story or photo does not make it to print or broadcast. It is more positive to think forward to the next event and how to develop a more appealing presentation to the media.

## 18. Annual School Council Newsletter

### 18.1 Report of Activities

- 18.1.1 All School Councils must produce a brief report of their activities for the school year, as required by the Ministry of Education under *Regulation 612/00, School Councils*. Section 24 reads: "Every school council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of the school and to the board that established the council."
- 18.1.2 The Director's Office coordinates the compilation of these reports into an annual School Council Newsletter, which will provide useful information about, and ideas for, School Council activities around the district.

## 18.2 **The Process**

School Councils are requested to submit, electronically, reports of up to 500 words (half a page) to the Communications Office by June 1 each year using the First Class e-mail system. Photos of school activities may also be included using either a "jpeg" or "gif" file format. School logos may also be included. All submissions will be edited if they exceed the space available.

## 18.3 **Content of the Report**

- 18.3.1 Goals for the school year (action plans);
- 18.3.2 Major initiatives of the School Council (i.e. school/community communication strategies; partnership development with other sectors of the community, etc.);
- 18.3.3 Notable School Council achievements, e.g. ideas/actions that have worked well and that others may wish to try; and/or
- 18.3.4 Items of general interest.

## 19. **School Council Internal Conflict Resolution Guideline**

### 19.1 **Preamble**

The mandate of School Council is to give advice, make recommendations and report to the school administration and, on occasion, to the board, about matters affecting the school. The goal of each School Council should be to improve education for students of the school.

Members of School Councils are expected to respect and honour the Code of Ethics as set out in Section 16.4 above.

### 19.2 **Procedures for Resolution**

The success of School Councils depends, to a considerable degree, on all members (parents, principal, teachers, and community) working together for the betterment of the students. The key is the person chairing a meeting, working closely with the principal. If, for some reason, an issue arises which is not resolved to the mutual satisfaction of those concerned, the person chairing can help resolve the issue by applying the following strategies:

- a) Remaining calm and not over-reacting. Over-reaction escalates the conflict and does not resolve it.
- b) Listening openly and effectively to hear what others are saying.
- c) Trying to understand different points of view, concerns and frustration.
- d) Encouraging the complainant to provide factual information. If all the information is not available, the complainant should be encouraged to provide it for the next meeting.
- e) Ensuring that the School Council decides who will deal with the situation or problem, not the complainant. Make it clear that the findings will be reported back to the School Council.
- f) Discussing possible solutions and assuring the complainant that his/her concerns will be addressed.
- g) Summarizing what will happen next and ensuring it is in accord with established School Council practices.
- h) Advising the complainant in writing as soon as the information is available.
- i) Ensuring that personal matters are NOT discussed. Libel laws apply in School Councils as they do anywhere else.

### 19.3 **More Difficult Situations**

The majority of concerns should be resolved through the use of these suggestions. There are times, however, when more difficult situations arise. Such situations could be:

- 19.3.1 Conflict between School Council members;
- 19.3.2 School Council members not fulfilling their responsibilities as defined by the School Council constitution;
- 19.3.3 Someone consistently undermining the work of the School Council through such counterproductive behaviour as aggression, belittling others or failing to follow established procedures or protocols; or
- 19.3.4 Someone failing to comply with Avon Maitland District School Board Code of Ethics or the director's administrative procedures related to Ontario Schools Code of Conduct.

19.4 If, after repeated attempts to deal with a consistently difficult person, the problem is still not resolved, the chair may call a closed meeting. A closed meeting may be called by the School Council chair, or will be called by the chair at the request of two other members. Only School Council members and others involved in the dispute are present at a closed meeting. To avoid bias or the appearance of bias, it is essential that there be no conflict of interest between the person chairing the meeting and the person or persons in conflict. Where a conflict exists or appears to exist with the chair, another member of the School Council, or an impartial external mediator, shall chair the meeting. In this latter case, the outside chair should be someone not involved in the school or educational system unless otherwise agreed upon by the parties to the dispute. Mediators may be regional representatives, clergy, municipal officials, or persons trained in mediation.

19.5 Other options available to the School Council include, in rare and specific instances:

- 19.5.1 Requesting the principal to issue a trespass notice, which effectively bans an individual from meetings if he or she does not respect the decorum and procedures established by the School Council; or
- 19.5.2 Referral to the police with a request to lay a charge of disturbance of the peace under the Criminal Code when appropriate.

### 19.6 **Closed Meeting Format**

19.6.1 At a closed meeting it is understood that:

- a) All information presented is confidential and must not be repeated outside of the meeting;
- b) All information presented must be factual;
- c) All persons involved in the dispute must be invited; and
- d) The person chosen as secretary for the meeting is responsible for producing a true copy of the minutes.

19.6.2 The secretary will record minutes but will not circulate them outside of the meeting. The secretary will ask all present to read the minutes prior to leaving the meeting and request approval for the minutes. Participants will be asked to sign the minutes indicating they have read them. The minutes record who was at the meeting and reports that they have read the minutes as approved by the meeting.

19.6.3 All involved in the dispute must be advised of the agenda, meeting date and time by letter from those calling the meeting. All participants must understand that decisions are final i.e. that the School Council is acting within its own jurisdiction and that there is no appeal procedure.

- 19.6.4 Prior to beginning the meeting, the person chairing the meeting must clarify the procedure to be followed during the meeting. The person chairing the meeting should ensure that all the facts are presented. The School Council, as represented at the meeting, will determine what action it wishes to take. This decision shall be carried by a simple majority.
- 19.6.5 The person chairing the meeting will advise the disputants, in writing, of the outcome of the meeting and the decision of the school council.
- 19.6.6 The secretary of the meeting will respect the confidentiality of the meeting and ensure the safekeeping of the minutes in a manner similar to that for other school records.
- 19.6.7 Members of the School Council participating in such a meeting may be subject to criticism for the decisions they make, but they are expected to act in the best interests of the school and its students.

This guideline is intended to provide School Councils with advice for dealing with situations where conflict among members or arising from one or more individuals interferes with the successful operation of the school council as it attempts to fulfill its mandate as directed by Regulation 612/00.

## **THE SCHOOL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION**

Each of the elementary and secondary schools in Avon Maitland District School Board will have a School Council constitution. The following Articles shall appear in all such Constitutions.

It is, however, recognized and appreciated that each school is unique with specific needs and interests. Therefore, although the following Articles must be a part of each School Council constitution, schools are encouraged to add points, as they pertain to their individual schools and their communities, where deemed necessary and appropriate. Copies of each School Council's constitution shall be available in the school as well as on file centrally at the Education Centre (administration office).

**AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD  
(Name of School)  
SCHOOL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION**

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Article 1	Name of Organization
Article II	Address of Organization
Article III	School Mission Statement
Article IV	(a) Purpose and Objectives (b) Beliefs and Action Plans
Article V	Role of the School Council
Article VI	Responsibilities of the School Council
Article VII	Membership
Article VIII	Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council
Article IX	Term of Office
Article X	Elections and Appointment Procedures
Article XI	Meetings
Article XII	Sub-committees
Article XIII	Fund-raising
Article XIV	Accounting / Auditing
Article XV	Liability
Article XVI	Evaluation / Amendments



## **SCHOOL COUNCIL FUND-RAISING**

The following checklist is provided for principals to use with School Councils, which are raising money via various School Council fund-raising activities. The following are guidelines and rules that must be followed.

These guidelines are taken from *Ontario Regulation 612/00 - School Councils*, from this administrative procedure, and the following administrative procedures: Administrative Procedure 116 Community Access to Schools and Sites; AP 321 Fund-Raising; AP 322 Partnerships and Advertising in Schools; and AP 513 Accounts: School Generated Funds.

### **1. Constitution**

Each of the elementary and secondary schools in Avon Maitland District School Board will have a School Council constitution as described in Appendix A. Fund-raising, Accounting/Auditing and Liability are three of the articles that must be a part of each School Council constitution.

### **2. Accountability**

#### **2.1 Minutes of Meetings**

School Council shall keep minutes of all of its meetings and records of all of its financial transactions. The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person. This does not apply to minutes and records that are more than four years old. (*Ontario Regulation 612/00 and AP 113*)

The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person. (*Ontario Regulation 612/00 and AP 113*)

#### **2.2 Annual Report**

Every School Council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of that school and to the board that established the council. (*O. Reg. 612/00 and AP 113*)

If the School Council engages in fund-raising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities. (*O. Reg. 612/00 and AP 113*)

#### **2.3 Use/Allocation of Funds Raised**

When school, parent and/or board organizations approach the general public for financial assistance of approved school projects, the director of education and board believes the maintenance of good public relations with the community must be a prime requisite of any such fund-raising project. (Administrative Procedure 321) School Councils are eligible to obtain lottery licenses for fundraising activities such as raffles. These lottery proceeds cannot be used to purchase something that would be provided by the Ministry of Education (e.g. textbooks). The proceeds may fund such things as co-curricular activities and field trips. If the proceeds are used to fund assets, the School Council must give these assets to the school "in trust".

All school fund-raising projects must be approved by the principal in consultation with the supervisory official designated by the director of education. (AP 321)

## 2.4 Purpose-specific Funds

Each school shall have an annual fund-raising plan and announce it to the school community. Each fund-raising group will set clear goals for the fund-raising project before beginning fund-raising activities. (AP 321 and AP 513)

The procedures, as described in Administrative Procedure 513, provide the criteria for the administration of school generated funds. These procedures also apply to organizations such as Parent-Teacher Associations, School Councils, etc. where staff or students are vehicles to the establishment of these funds.

## 2.5 Internal Controls

The internal control practices, which shall be implemented as per AP 513, include:

- a) **Separation of duties** for collection, recording, disbursing and reconciling funds;
- b) Proper documentation of all transactions;
- c) Physical safeguarding of assets;
- d) Proper approvals for the distribution of funds;
- e) **Two signing authorities on all transactions;** and
- f) Independent checks **and periodic reports** on the operations of the various funds.

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