



Revised Policy No. 7.11

SCHOOL COUNCILS

Date Approved: 2001 04 19 **Projected Review Date: 2008 01 01**
Date Revised: 2005 04 25

Policy Statement: It is the policy of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board to establish and to maintain a School Council in every school of the Board, in order to promote and improve student learning through ongoing valued parental, staff and community input. The Board will assist School Councils to establish and to maintain a district-wide School Council Support Group .

RESPONSIBILITY: Director of Education

OPERATING PROCEDURES:

1.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1 The primary focus of School Councils shall be to promote and improve student learning and enhance system accountability.
- 1.2 The School Council shall act in an advisory capacity to the principal and to the Board and/or senior staff in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Board and of the Education Act and Regulations.
- 1.3 In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the School Council shall:
 - promote the best interests of the student body, school and community
 - establish its goals, priorities and procedures
 - determine the need, and organize information and training sessions to enable members of the Council to develop their skills as Council members
 - hold a minimum of four meetings per year (all meetings shall be open to members of the school community)
 - determine whether to establish a local school council constitution
 - 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
 - establish a procedure for reimbursement of expenses incurred by school council members on behalf of the Council.

School Councils will achieve these goals through a variety of strategies, including:

- communicating with and providing ongoing advice to the Principal;
 - participating in the development and implementation of the school improvement plan;
 - volunteering in various capacities;
 - promoting parent education and learning at home;
 - coordinating community resources.
- 1.4 In all School Councils, parents and guardians shall form the majority, except in adult day schools, where parent positions shall be held by students. The Board

encourages the membership of the Council be reflective of the diversity of the school community.

- 1.5 Planning for parent and local surrounding community involvement is to be included in the school plan.
- 1.6 The Principals shall seek the advice of the School Council membership in the development and implementation of their school improvement plans.
- 1.7 The Director or his/her designate will provide a synopsis of School Councils' annual reports and recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

2.0 Operations

- 2.1 The Board shall support training and development opportunities for School Councils to assist them in their roles and responsibilities.
- 2.2 The Board shall assist the School Council Support Group by developing and maintaining a regular communication with and among District School Councils.

3.0 School Council Support Group (SCSG)

- 3.1 The Board will assist in the establishment of a School Council Support Group. The purpose of this committee is to facilitate communication, provide current and relevant resources and organize detailed training for all school council members. The membership of the School Council Support Group:
 - is voluntary, not elected.
 - must be composed of those parents who have a minimum of two year's experience with a local school council in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.
 - must be standing members of local HWDSB School Councils.
 - should give consideration to a balanced representation between secondary and elementary within the membership.
 - should give consideration to a balanced representation across the District. Every effort should be made to ensure each ward has a representative.
 - will select from its volunteers' pool a chairperson, secretary and communications officer. This selection may be completed through consensus or election.
- 3.2 All meetings of the School Council Support Group will be open to the public.
- 3.3
 - a) The first call for volunteers for the formation of the School Council Support Group shall be the responsibility of the Director of Education.
 - b) An annual October call for volunteers for the formation of the School Council Support Group shall be the responsibility of the Director of Education in co-operation with the current School Council Support Group Chairperson.
- 3.4 The School Council Support Group shall, in consultation with local school councils, develop a written constitution for its operations.
- 3.5 The School Council Support Group shall:
 - within the first eight weeks of the school year, provide new council orientation sessions that will be open to school council parents, board staff, community members and Trustees.
 - provide training and resources as required to strengthen local school councils in their efforts to improve student learning.
 - make every effort to create training teams, composed of parents, Board staff and community members, where appropriate.
 - facilitate and monitor regular communication between the District and local school councils.

- School Council Support Group shall provide a written annual report for local School Councils, Trustees, and the Director of Education.
- 3.6 The Director or his/her designate shall attend all regular public meetings of the School Council Support Group and act as an ex-officio member.
- 3.7 Supervisory Officers of the Board, and Trustees may attend regular public meetings of the School Council Support Group, including any ad-hoc committee meetings.

4.0 Parent Representation on System Committees

- 4.1 The School Council Support Group shall:
 - facilitate the timely solicitation of parent school council members to system committees as requested by the Board through an “all call” network.
 - calls for parent representatives shall inform re type of candidate(s) sought, time expectations, roles and responsibilities of the committees.
 - School Council Support Group will select individual(s) and alternative(s) from those who volunteer. When volunteers exceed the maximum requested for a system committee, screening for selection will be based on information provided by the applicant.
 - School Council Support Group members are not to be selected for system committees.
- 4.2 The Board Committee Chairs shall:
 - provide information to the School Council Support Group in a timely manner regarding the necessary type of candidate, time expectations, role and responsibilities of committees when making the request for school council participation.
 - Provide notice when a committee is no longer sitting or active.
- 4.3 In order for School Council members sitting on system committees to give feedback to and from committees, they will report to school councils through the School Council Support Group.

5.0 Ward Information Network (WIN)

- 5.1. The purpose of the WIN meetings is to provide regular direct communication between local School Councils and their Trustee and Superintendent of Education.
- 5.2 WIN meetings will be organized and facilitated by the local trustee and/or the local Superintendent(s) of Education.
- 5.3 WIN agendas will be developed through input from local school councils.
- 5.4 WIN meetings are to be held a minimum of twice per year. The initial meeting is to be held within the first twelve weeks of the school year, the second to be held within four weeks following the March Break.
- 5.5 The Trustee and/or local Superintendent of Education shall provide the School Council Support Group with feedback from the Ward Information Network meetings to determine School Council needs.

6.0 Directives

- 6.1 Nothing in this policy detracts from the statutory authority and duties of the Director of Education, Superintendents of Education and Principals to implement the policies, programs and plans of the Board, and to oversee and/or operate the schools in accordance with the Education Act and Regulations. All school staff remain under the jurisdiction of the Principal at all times.

- 6.2 The Director of Education is authorized to issue guidelines in support of this policy.
- 6.3 It is the intent of this policy that neither WIN nor the School Council Support Group replaces the autonomy and legal authority of the local school council to make recommendations to the principal and school board on any matter.

7.0 References

School Councils - Ontario Regulation 612/00, issued December 2000

Operation of Schools - General - Ontario Regulation 613/00, issued December 2000

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 122 issued April 12, 1995 (revoked December 2000)

The Education Act as amended, Section X

The Road Ahead III: A Report on the Role of School Councils, issued November 1998