



## School Councils in HWDSB

An Overview

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## Learning Goals

- ✓ Understand the mandate, roles and responsibilities of the school council
- ✓ Understand the membership of school council (who can participate) and the timelines for their election
- ✓ Understand the duties of the principal and the parent members of school council



- School councils provide advice to the principal and school board. Every school must have a school council and members include parents, the principal, a teacher, a student (in high schools), a non-teaching staff member and a community representative. The majority of members must be parents, including the school council chair
- Where a school has a Home and School group, a member may also sit on school council
- Principals do not vote on school council decisions



- School councils are governed by [Ontario Regulation 612](#), which sets out the purpose, membership and election requirements for school councils. Under section 2(1), the purpose of the school council is “through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.”



To enhance student learning through the co-operative efforts of parent, students, staff members and others in the community.

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- Advise the principal and, where appropriate, the school board (e.g., Parent Involvement Committee - PIC)
- Place student interests first
- Support school success planning goals
- Encourage parent and community involvement
- Promote positive attitudes towards public education

- School councils play a significant role:
  - They work with the principal and staff to:
    - Review the school's priorities
    - Support the development and implementation of plans to achieve desired goals

It is the **collective** commitment of staff, parents and the community that breathes life into a school plan.



Parental involvement is one of the most significant factors contributing to a child's success in school. When parents are involved in their education, the level of student achievement increases.

Education Improvement Commission





School Council membership consists of:

- A majority of parents who have a child enrolled in the school
- 1 student – secondary (mandatory), elementary (optional) (appointed by student council, elected by students, or appointed by the principal)
- Principal (vice-principal may attend in principal's place)
- 1 teacher (elected by teachers)



- 1 non-teaching staff representative (elected by support staff)
- 1 or more community representatives (appointed by council)
- 1 representative from Home and School Association

The term of office for School Council Members is one year from the point of election to the election of the next year - Reg. 612, s.6 (1)

- Ontario Regulation 612 indicates that elections for school council are to be held annually within the first **30 calendar days** of the start of the school year
- *Elections for school council membership must be held within this timeframe*
- *The principal of a school must inform all parents of the opportunity to run for a parent position on school council*
- The principal of a school must inform parents of the date, time and location of the school council election at least 14 days before the election
- The first school council meeting is to be held within the first 35 calendar days of the school year

- The following individuals are not permitted to be members of your school council:
  - MPPs
  - Trustees
  - A parent who is both a parent and staff member at the school
    - Such parents could act as a teaching / non-teaching staff representative



- Some ways to ensure your council is diverse and represents the school:
  - Form an Election Planning Committee in the spring
  - Mentor existing school council members
  - Recruit parent leaders and active volunteers
  - Seek out parents who represent diverse communities
  - Ask teachers to suggest parents they think might be interested

- Attend, support and promote council's operations, meetings and other activities
- Act as an important source of information and advise the council when they are not in compliance with Board policies and procedures
- Solicit council's views; consider and respond to their recommendations
- Notify the community and post materials for parents



- Regularly attend school council meetings
- Maintain a school-wide perspective
- Act as a link between the council and the community
- Encourage participation of all parents
- Participate in information and training programs, sub-committees
- Assist with tasks of council

- All council meetings are open to the public
- All meetings of council sub-committees are open to the public
- Every meeting must have a question period
- Agendas and minutes of all meetings must be available to all parents
  - School Website
  - Newsletters
  - Social Media





- Parents must make up the majority of your school council membership
- Principal or VP cannot vote
- Chair or co-chairs must be parent(s)



- School councils must have at least four meetings each school year
- First meeting must be within 35 calendar days of the start of the school year
- Must have quorum to vote (quorum is 50% of the voting membership +1) as outlined in the Regulation. School council by-laws may establish different quorum requirements.
- Principal must notify parents of date, time, place of all school council and committee meetings



Parent involvement in almost any form produces measurable gains in student achievement.

Dixon (1992)

Dixon, A. (1992, April). Parents: Full partners in the decision-making process. NASSP Bulletin, 76(543), 15-18.

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- Councils may have sub-committees – each committee must have parent representation. Some examples are:
  - Fundraising
  - Communication Recruitment / Elections
  - Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant Initiatives
  - Outreach
  - Constitution & Bylaws
  - Special Events (i.e. Reunions, Orientations)
  - Volunteer Recognition

- Acts as an advisory body providing ideas and suggestions to assist the principal, trustee and superintendent in making decisions on:
  - School events calendar
  - Code of conduct / dress code
  - Budget priorities
  - Extracurricular activities (where volunteers are available)
  - Fundraising
  - School improvement planning



- School council on school policies regarding:
  - Code of conduct
  - Appropriate dress for students
  - School plan for continuous improvement
- The principal may also wish to involve their school council and the community in conversations around a variety of other subjects
- The principal must report how this advice has been considered



- Maintain school-wide perspective
- Legally required to operate with Education Act and HWDSB policies
- Record and make available council meeting minutes and financial transactions
- Act in best interest of the school and all students
- Foster good relationships
- A Chair or Co-Chairs are required. All other positions are optional including secretary and treasurer, unless specified in your bylaws

- All school councils will be invited to complete principal profiles to help HWDSB select and place principals at individual schools
- Ensures superintendents have up-to-date information when making decisions regarding administrative transfers
- These profiles will form part of the criteria considered by the Board when making administrative changes





- Ontario Regulation 612 states that school councils must have by-laws to address
  - election procedures
  - filling of vacancies
  - conflict of interest
  - conflict resolution procedures

Reg. 612, s.15 (2)



- You must also submit an annual report that summarizes activities for the academic year
  - Fundraising activities will be included in this report with details of the initiatives and corresponding financial statements
- The principal must provide a copy of this report to every parent of a student enrolled in the school at the time of the report (this may be posted on the school website)



### School Councils

Are to be consulted by the principal about:

- the process and criteria for selection and placement of principals and VPs including the Principal Profile, provision of input as to the qualities and skills for the Board and administration to consider in the selection of a school principal
- school codes of conduct and dress
- policies for fundraising by the School Council
- action plans for student achievement – School Improvement Plan
- Parents must make up the majority of membership.
- The principal (who is a non-voting member), one teaching and one non-teaching employee, one or more community representatives and a representative of the H&S (if there is a H&S at that school) make up the rest of the School Council
- Minimum meeting requirement – 4 per school year
- The primary role of the principal is that of a resource. The principal, or a VP, must be in attendance at meetings.

### Home and School

- Build a sense of community by involving parents
- Organize activities for parents and community in the school
- Host information nights on topics of interest
- Educate members about issues affecting the education system in Ontario
- Co-ordinate services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreation, and nutrition programs
- Enhance the home-school relationship through:
  - Establishing school-community communication strategies
  - Developing resolutions through the identification of local issues for advocacy by OFHSA
- Associations are membership driven: members determine the activities and direction of the H&S

**More information on Home & School and School Generated Funds can be found [HERE](#).**



<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html>

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## School Councils

**tips for parents**

What do you think about your school's homework policy? Do you have strong feelings about the school's dress code? Have you good ideas for recruiting volunteers to coach teams? You would be a great candidate for the school council.

**Purpose**  
School councils are elected to advise principals and boards on ways to improve student achievement to make the education system more accountable to parents.  
By law, they must be consulted on:

- The process and criteria for selection and placement of principals and vice-principals,
- Board codes of conduct and dress,
- Policies for fund-raising by school councils, and
- Action plans for student improvement based on standardized test results.

School councils may also make recommendations to their principals and school boards on any matter from improving the school yard to changing the length of the lunch break to discussing school closings. Principals and school boards are required by law to consider recommendations made by school councils and to report back to them on how they plan to act on their advice.

School councils in turn, are responsible for sharing information with parents and the community and seeking their ideas and views about matters under consideration by the council. For example, if the school is planning to develop a policy on homework, council members should try to consult with as many parents as possible.

**Membership**  
Every school is required by law to hold school council elections within the first 30 days of the school year.  
Members must include:

- the principal (or vice-principal), who is a non-voting member,
- one teacher,
- one non-teaching employee,
- one student in secondary schools (optional for elementary schools),
- one or more community representatives appointed by the elected council, and
- as applicable, a representative from the recognized parent associations in the School Council Handbook.

**Principals and School Councils**  
Principals are supposed to support the work of the council by providing information and by notifying the school community about school council meetings and elections, and publicizing the names of council members and annual reports of council activities and financial statements.

People for Education is an independent parents' group working to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools. You can reach us at: #0, Box 64, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2S6. phone: 416-534-0188 fax: 416-536-0280 e-mail: info@peopleforeducation.com or visit: www.peopleforeducation.com

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/School-Councils.pdf>



Thank you for your work on  
behalf of the children

For information or support, please email [PIC@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:PIC@hwdsb.on.ca)

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