

Ancaster Secondary School School Council Constitution and Bylaws



February 2025

Ancaster Secondary School Council Bylaws

The purpose of School Council is to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. School Councils are advisory bodies which make recommendations to Principals or Vice-Principals and School Boards on issues outlined in Regulation 612/00 (last amendment O. Reg. 330/10) of the Education Act. The School Council will seek input and advice from the school community in order to represent the best interests of all students.

Composition of School Council

The Ancaster School Council will include:

- Maximum of 30 parent/guardian members including:
- 1 Chair or 2 Co-Chairs
- 1 Secretary
- Parent Representatives
- 1 Teaching staff member (this position can be shared but constitutes 1 vote)
- 1 Non-teaching staff member
- 1 Student Representative
- 1 School Principal or Vice-Principal (non-voting member)
- 1 Community Representative

Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members

The Chair or two Co-Chairs:

The Chairs are voting members who:

- arrange meetings;
- prepare agendas while ensuring items reflect the concerns and interests of the entire school community, send a call for agenda items one (1) week prior to the meeting and forward to the school Principal for review five (5) days prior to the scheduled meeting;
- distribute the agenda along with the previous month's draft minutes to School Council members via email prior to the meeting;
- effectively chair School Council meetings;
- participate in information and training programs and update members;
- facilitate the resolution of conflict and address any concerns from council members, parents, or community;
- orientate new members with the Ontario Regulations 612/00 and 298, Policy NO 7.11, the

- School Council Manual, information on the School Council website, all related bylaws; communicate with school Principal and Vice Principal on behalf of School Council and provide any correspondence to School Council because of such communication;
- consult with School Board staff members when required;
- ensure on-going communication with the school community on decisions that will affect students.

The Secretary:

- The Secretary is a voting member who:
- records and distributes minutes of School Council meetings to School Council Chair or Co-Chairs for review before the next scheduled meeting;
- once approved forwards the minutes to the school Principal or Vice-Principal for posting to the public

Parent Representatives:

Parent Representatives are voting members who:

- participate on sub-committees established by School Council on a volunteer basis;
- are willing to attend meetings on a regular basis;
- observe and adhere to the applicable Education Act regulations and any established by-laws, including the code of ethics;
- contribute to discussions of School Council;
- solicit the views of the other parents/community to share with School Council, and report back on how any recommendations were considered;
- encourage all parents to participate, welcoming them to School Council meetings and informing them of the many ways in which they can help;
- assess the progress of School Council goals and priorities on a regular basis.

School Staff Representatives (Teaching and Non-teaching):

The School Staff Representatives are voting member who:

- contributes to the discussions of School Council;
- solicits views from staff members to share with the school council;
- may participate on any committee established by School Council;
- communicates information back to their staff groups
- observes School Council code of ethics and bylaws.

The Student Representative:

The Student Representative is a voting member who:

- contributes to the discussions of School Council;
- solicits the views of students to share with school council;
- may participate on any committee established by School Council;
- communicates information from the council to other students;
- observes School Council code of ethics and bylaws.

The Community Representative:

The Community Representative is voting member who:

- contributes to the discussions of School Council;
- represents the community's perspective;
- may participate on any committee established by School Council;
- observes School Council code of ethics and bylaws.

Election Procedures

Establishing School Council Election Procedures

Establishing School Council

1. The nominations of parents/ legal guardians interested in holding a position on School Council shall be made on the nomination form.
2. Candidates may be self-nominated or nominated by another parent or legal guardian.
3. Completed nomination forms will be brought to the All Candidates meeting. Nomination forms will be made available at the All Candidates meeting in the event that a parent/guardian did not receive one. It is the responsibility of Candidates not able to attend the All Candidates meeting to email the Principal and make arrangements to have their nomination form and bio available for the meeting.
4. If the number of parents/ legal guardians who express an interest are within the allotted number of positions as outlined in the Constitution, the positions shall be acclaimed.
5. If the number of parent/guardian representatives does not form the majority on School Council, the Principal will inform the school community of the vacancies and call for further applicants. Applicants who come forward at this time, will fill the vacant positions in the order of their communication to the Principal to the maximum number of positions.
6. If more than the allotted number of parents/ legal guardians outlined in the Constitution express an interest in being a parent member at the all candidates meeting, then an election will take place within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the start of the school year.
7. The Principal will send out information regarding nominations, election date, location, and time. This should be sent home to all parents/ legal guardians a minimum of fourteen (14) days in advance of the election.
8. Ballots will be available for parents/ legal guardians to vote on the fixed date of the election.
9. Voting will be done via a secret ballot, and majority vote will determine membership.

10. Each parent/ legal guardian of a student enrolled in the school is entitled to one vote.
11. Voting will be manned and counted by parents/ legal guardians not seeking election along with one school staff member.
12. In the event of a tie for the final parent representative position, the tie will be broken after a determination by lot.
13. Candidates will be notified of the results by a school staff designate and confirm their acceptance prior to the results being released to the school community.
14. The School Council shall ensure that the names of elected positions are publicized to the school community within thirty (30) days of the election.
15. Only the names of the successful candidates shall be made public.
16. A list of candidates and the vote results will be kept on file by School Council in the event that a vacancy occurs.
17. All ballots will be retained by the Principal for thirty (30) days from the date of the election, and then destroyed.
18. All appeals related to School Council elected positions shall be lodged with and resolved by the school Principal. Such appeals must be resolved within thirty (30) days of the election date. Should a resolution not be found, the Supervisory Officer responsible for the school shall be the final arbitrator.
19. All retiring members and new members of School Council shall attend the first meeting following the election in September to help in the transition of the new School Council.

Establishing positions within elected School Council

1. Once School Council is established, the selection of the designated School Council positions shall take place at the first meeting following the election or acclamation.
2. If only one parent member is nominated for a position, the position shall be acclaimed.
3. If more than one parent member is nominated, then an election will take place at the School Council meeting.
4. Each School Council member shall be entitled to one vote.
5. Voting will be done via a secret ballot, and majority vote will determine elected positions.
6. A school staff member along with a non-elected School Council member will be responsible for tallying ballots.
7. Candidates will be notified of the results prior to the results being released to School Council or the community.
8. The Principal shall ensure that the names of elected positions are publicized to the school community within thirty (30) days of the election.
9. Only the names of the successful candidates shall be made public.
10. A list of candidates and the vote results will be kept on file by School Council in the event that a vacancy for that position occurs.

11. All ballots will be retained by the school Principal for thirty (30) days from the date of the election, and then destroyed.
12. Positions are held for one year, as per the regulations.

Vacancies

If all Thirty (30) parent/guardian member positions have not been filled and an eligible individual expresses interest during the year, the position will be acclaimed.

If any School Council positions become vacant because of resignation, inability of a member to fulfil his or her roles and responsibilities, no longer eligible, or other cause, the remaining members shall constitute the school Council, unless the parent/guardian majority is not maintained. If the majority of parents/guardians on the council is not maintained, School Council will fill positions from non-elected candidates from the previous election. If there are two or more interested individuals, an election will be held with voting open to the public in attendance at the next School Council meeting. The successful candidate shall serve out the balance of the term of the member being replaced.

Term of Office

Term of Office provisions shall comply with Ontario Regulation 612/00 of the Education Act.

Membership on School Council shall terminate:

- at the time of the next election;
- when a member ceases to meet the criteria set out in the Regulation; and or fails to adhere to all Board Regulations and the School Council Code of Ethics
- when a member submitted a formal letter of resignation to the Chair/Co-Chair

School Council Member Code of Ethics

- Members will consider the best interests of all students.
- Members will be guided by the mission statement of The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.
- Members will follow Guidelines as set out in Ontario Regulation 612/10 of the Education Act.
- Members will act according to school policies and procedures.
- Members will carry out duties with honesty and integrity.
- Members will recognize and respect the personal integrity of all members of the school community.
- Members will treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared.
- Members will encourage a positive atmosphere where individual contributions are encouraged and valued.

- Members will respect the democratic principles and accept the consensus or majority vote of council.
- Members will not disclose confidential information.
- Members will only discuss matters of concern to the whole school community at council meetings.
- Members will communicate in an appropriate manner throughout meetings.
- Members will promote high standards of ethical practice in the school community.
- Members will declare any conflict of interest.
- Members will not accept any financial payment or benefit through School Council involvement.
- Member will attempt to not miss more than two scheduled meetings without proper notice to the Chair/Co-Chairs.
- Members of School Council will not make a public statement on behalf of School Council without prior approval from School Council and Principal.

Conflict of Interest

1. Members of School Council shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or business entities in which they may have an interest, stand to benefit either directly or indirectly by decisions of School Council.
2. A member shall exclude themselves from voting and discussion by leaving the room in which:
 - a conflict of interest is likely to result;
 - the member's ability to carry out his/her duties and responsibilities as a member of School Council may be jeopardized;
 - the member or his or her relatives, friends, organization, or business entity associated are to gain or benefit directly or indirectly as a result of actions taken by the Board, School, or School Council.
3. A member shall not accept favors or economic benefits from any individuals or organizations known to be seeking a business contract with the school

School Council Procedures

- At the first meeting of the year, School Council will determine the dates and times for future meetings of which there must be a minimum of four (4).
- **Quorum** - School Council requires 50% + 1 members present in order for a vote to take place.
- Voting should take place during meetings, however, if there are time constraints or not enough members to meet quorum and a decision needs to be made before a meeting can be held, voting can take place via email provided that all votes are

recorded, kept confidential, and kept on file. E-Votes are deployed by the Chair or Co-Chair only.

- The School Council will establish any committee or sub-committee that is deemed appropriate in order to carry out specific functions and report to School Council as required.
- Membership on a committee or sub-committee of School Council will be open to all members of the school community and chaired by a voting member of School Council. Sub-committee Chairs are responsible for reporting to School Council Chair/Co-Chairs in a timely and accurate fashion.
- The School Council shall keep the school community and interested parties advised of its actions through School Council minutes, and, and postings at the school.
 - At School Council's meetings, members of the school community will be allowed to provide additional input and or engage in debate on the matters before the School Council during the meeting.
 - In the interest of time, only topics outlined on the agenda will be discussed at a meeting, unless time permits at the end of the meeting. If time does not permit or the Principal or member requires time to gather information, the issue will be tabled at a future meeting.
- Attendance of School Council members and interested parents will be taken at each meeting.

Concerns brought to the attention of School Council

A Council issue:

1. The Chair or Co-Chairs will respond the concern with consultation with the Principal if required.
2. If the issue is brought to the attention of a School Council member, if the issue needs to be reviewed, explain that the issue will be reviewed and that the matter will be addressed. The member will then respond after consultation with the Principal if required.
3. If the issue comes up at a Council Meeting – the issue will be addressed if time constraints allow otherwise it will be tabled at another meeting.

School or Board issue:

1. If the concern is classroom related, then the parent will be advised to address the issue with the teacher. If the problem is not solved, they will be advised to speak to the Principal or Vice Principal. If the problem is not solved, they will be advised to speak to School Superintendent.
3. If there is a concern about a School policy/Board procedure, then the parent will be advised to go to the Principal or Vice Principal first. If the problem is

not solved, they will be advised to contact the School Trustee or School Council. * Council may wish to make a formal address to the Board on behalf of parents, only if Council votes to do so.

Conflict Resolution

- The Chair/Co-Chairs will have primary responsibility for dealing with conflict by applying strategies outlined in the Council Manual.
- The goal is to come up with a consensus.
- All in attendance will be given an opportunity to express his or her opinion about the issue at dispute without interruption.

- The Chair/Co-Chairs will clarify statements made by all speakers to identify common grounds among the points of view raised and to set out joint interests of all members.
 - If no common ground can be identified, the Chair/Co-Chairs will seek to clarify preferences among members before proceeding further.

- The Chair/Co-Chairs may table an issue to another meeting only if additional information needs to be acquired in order to find a solution, and only if there is ample time available before that decision is required to be made.
 - If a common ground cannot be established, then a majority vote will take place. Voting principles are to be adhered to.

 - If a conflict still exists, the Chair/Co-Chairs may remind council members to adhere to the code of ethics by accepting the consensus of the majority of the group. The Chair/Co-Chairs may request assistance from resource staff, the Board, or Principal to facilitate a resolution to the conflict should the need arise.

- The Chair/Co-Chairs will have the right to limit discussion on any particular topic.

- The Chair/Co-Chairs will ask the speaker/presenter(s) to bring to conclusion his/her discussion within one minute of the allotted time. This will be made clear in advance of all speakers.

- If the speaker/presenter(s) continues, the Chair shall request the speaker/presenter to end speakers.

- If the speaker/presenter(s) continues, the Chair will call an immediate recess of the School Council members for 10 minutes and request to have a private conversation with speaker/presenter(s) and the Principal. The Chair will offer the following two options to the speaker/presenter(s):
 1. Resume the meeting and stand down.

2. Resume the meeting and ask the speaker/presenter(s) to leave the meeting.
- When the meeting continues, if the speaker/presenter(s) behavior is not appropriate, the Principal will intercede and request the speaker/presenter(s) to voluntarily leave the premises.
 - Should the above occur, School Council has the discretion to have the speaker/ presenter(s) to not have access to future meeting of School Council until a meeting is held with the School Superintendent or designate.

Extending a School Council Meeting.

Regular School Council meetings usually run one and one-half hours. If the need arises to extend a meeting from time to time, it will be done through a vote on Council. The vote can be done by a show of hands. The motion to extend the meeting can be granted but limited to 30 minutes extra.

Amendments

This constitution may be amended as follows:

The proposed amendment shall be submitted at any regular meeting of Council. The amendment shall be reviewed, discussed and voted on following the procedure below.

After such notice, the amendment shall become part of the constitution if, it is approved by the majority of present and voting members.

Notwithstanding the above, amendments may be mandated by The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Proposed constitutional amendments will be made available prior to any votes.

Constitutional amendments will be reported to the school community after being approved.