

HWDSB

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

**Guide for Parents/Guardians
and School Administrators**

School Council Handbook



Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
PURPOSE AND HISTORY OF THIS HANDBOOK.....	3
SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS PROCEDURES	6
SCHOOL COUNCIL CRITICAL TIMELINES	8
SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS.....	9
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL COUNCIL	10
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS.....	10
SCHOOL COUNCILS AND FUNDRAISING	11
APPENDIX 1 – Sample School Council Agenda	14
APPENDIX 2 – Sample Principal’s Report	16
APPENDIX 3 – Sample School Council Nomination Forms	18
APPENDIX 4 – Fundraising rules, checklists, and forms	20
APPENDIX 5 – MS TEAMS Technical ‘how-to’ Guide.....	22
APPENDIX 6 – How to facilitate virtual conversations and meetings in MS Teams	24
APPENDIX 7 – How to conduct virtual elections	25
APPENDIX 8 – Communications strategies, tips, and good practices	26
APPENDIX 9 – HWDSB Land Acknowledgement	28
APPENDIX 10 – Additional Resources and Links	28

INTRODUCTION

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's Mission is to

"Empower students to learn and grow to their full potential in a diverse world."

We know that outcomes improve for children and youth when schools, caregivers, guardians, and parents partner together and support a child's learning. For the purposes of this document, we use the term "parent" as an inclusive reference to all the people who might engage in supportive roles for students, including caregivers, guardians, and parents.

Parents may engage or participate in this learning in a variety of ways. Some parents are involved through discussions about school which happen at home or in small informal groups; other parents volunteer or participate in formal structures like School Council. We welcome all home-school connections in our work to support learning for all.

PURPOSE AND HISTORY OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is a support document for parents who choose to engage through School Councils. It was originally meant to roll out over three years and we are still on track for a full implementation. However, due to the unexpected covid-19 virus we offer this version of the Handbook with some additional information and resources. We include strategies that can help parents and School Councils function well in virtual settings, knowing that in-person meetings may not be permissible or advisable.

Stage 1 - 2019/20

Provide consistency through a focus on school council operations. *COMPLETED*

Stage 2- 2020/21

Add a focus on how to enhance parent engagement.

NEW: Resources and strategies have been added to address operations and engagement strategies in virtual settings.

Stage 3 - 2021/2022

Add a focus on how school councils can support the school improvement planning process in face-to-face and virtual settings. *NEXT YEAR*

This resource builds on the 2002 Ministry of Education document, [*School Councils: A Guide for Members*](#). We hope it will support the work of School Councils and administrators in the 2020-2021 school year as schools adapt during a pandemic.

Our commitment to parent engagement remains a high priority.

Note: The term parent is intended to be inclusive and represent parent, guardian and caregivers.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL COUNCIL?

PURPOSE OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Under the Education Act [Regulation 612](#), school boards in Ontario are required to establish a School Council for each school within the board. 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.**”

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL IS TO:

- Advise the principal and, where appropriate, the school board.
- Place students’ interest first
- Support school success planning goals
- Encourage parent and community involvement
- Promote positive attitudes towards public education

School Councils provide input to the principal or the board on any matter. The Principal is ultimately responsible for activities related to the school and therefore is responsible for school council activities.

School Council and Home & School: Both groups are represented in some schools. School council is governed through bylaws created by the council, which are aligned with Ministry Regulation 612. Home & School Associations are strong partners in the education of children; they are accountable to the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations and are not mandatory in schools.

REGULATIONS

School councils are governed by [Ontario Regulation 612](#) (<http://bit.ly/32mhsnm>) which sets out the purpose, membership and election requirements for school councils. Under section 2(1),

COMPOSITION/MEMBERSHIP

Every school must have a School Council and members (the majority whom are parents) include:

- ☐ Parents (must comprise the majority of the membership)
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Teacher from the school
- ☐ Student (in high schools with some provisions for student membership in elementary schools)
- ☐ Non-teaching staff member
- ☐ Community representative(s) appointed by the council
- ☐ Home and School Association representative from the school (if a Home and School Association is a partner at the school.)

ROLES

School Councils have voting members:

- ☐ Chair or Co-Chairs (must be parent members)
- ☐ Other possible roles (at the discretion of the Council)
- ☐ Members (see above). Note: Once voting membership is established, School Council must have quorum to vote. Quorum is 50% of the voting membership plus one.

DUTIES OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIR

The School Council chair is a parent/guardian who is not employed by the school board. The School Council chair is elected annually and, in addition to performing the same duties as other School Council members, is responsible for the following:

- ☐ Arrange and chair meetings
- ☐ Prepare meeting agendas (in consultation with the Principal). Post the agenda on the school website 48 hours before the meeting and circulate to School Council membership.
- ☐ Ensuring meeting minutes are recorded and maintained. Minutes should be shared with the larger school community after approval by the school council at the subsequent meeting. The Chair and Principal should approve the minutes before they are brought forward to the meeting for approval.
- ☐ Facilitate the resolution of conflict
- ☐ Communicate with the Principal on behalf of the council. Note: HWDSB will provide each School Council Chair with an email address. Principals will provide information about this email account to the chair after the election of the Chair within the first 30 calendar days of the school year.

A School Council's bylaws may outline additional responsibilities of the School Council Chair (e.g., acting as Secretary or Treasurer).

DUTIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

- ☐ Distribute material to school council members on behalf of the Board and Ministry of Education. This material should also be posted in an area accessible to parents.
- ☐ Attend, support and promote council's operations, meetings and other activities. Note: A Vice-Principal may attend in a Principal's place
- ☐ Act as an important source of information on laws, regulations and Board policies and procedures including advising the council when they may be in breach of Board policies and procedures
- ☐ Solicit council's views; consider and respond to their recommendations
- ☐ May participate on committees of the school council
- ☐ Notify the community and post materials for parents (e.g., posting of School Council meeting minutes on school website)

Principals do not vote on School Council decisions

The principal must consult:

- ☐ School council on school policies regarding:
- ☐ School Code of Conduct (if applicable)
- ☐ Appropriate dress for students (if applicable)
- ☐ 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.

SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS PROCEDURES

A person is qualified to be a parent member of a school council if they are a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school. Ideally, the membership of the school council will reflect the diversity of the school community. Parent membership is not restricted to any number of parents, however, the number of parent members on the council should be stipulated by a School Council bylaw. An HWDSB employee cannot be a parent member on the council of their child's school if they are employed at that school. If an HWDSB employee is employed elsewhere in the board, they can be on council if they take reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of their employment.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTION

Note: during the 2020-2021 school year, School Councils will not meet in person. Election processes will be online using Microsoft Teams [see [appendix 7](#)], or via confidential paper submissions.

PRE-ELECTION

Step 1:

Consider forming an election planning committee consisting of parents, teachers and support staff

Secondary schools should include a student representative, appointed by Student Council

Consider forming this committee in the Spring, prior to the next school year, so that there is adequate time to plan the election

Note: Section 7.3 of the School Council: A Guide for Members, provides useful timelines to help with this planning.

Step 2:

Develop an election plan before the last School Council meeting of the year

Include the date, time and location of the election for School Council parent members (must occur within first 30 calendar days of the school year) and ask the Principal to submit a permit request through eBase if the meeting is in-person and a specific room at the school is required. For virtual meetings, no eBase permit is required.

Step 3:

Advertise the election – communicate in June through the school newsletter, social media, School Messenger, and school website. [\[See Appendix 8\]](#)

Step 4:

Inform parents of the process for nominations and elections. Communication regarding school council elections can be shared through your school's summer communication or September start up letter. Parents must have at least 14 days' notice before the date of the election. [see [Appendix 3](#) for sample letter and form]

Step 5:

Ongoing communication in the days leading up to the election is essential to encourage parent engagement

Nomination forms are returned to the school or, as necessary, via an electronic collection process Note: Some schools may prefer to call this form a 'declaration of interest' rather than a nomination. Whatever language or words best suit the community are the words that should be used.

Step 6:

Collect the forms.

Create a list of candidates. You may invite people to have an opportunity to speak to their nomination if there are multiple people running for a position.

Inform parents of election date and how many positions need to be filled

Step 7:

Hold the election. [see [Appendix 7](#)]

DURING THE ELECTION

Elections must be conducted by secret ballot.

Only parents or guardians of a student enrolled at the school can vote

All eligible voters may cast one vote for each parent position

Voters must be present at the school for in-school meetings, or online or via phone for remote meetings on the election day(s) during the hours of the election

Attendance should be taken in order to account for number of voting individuals.

Note: Many School Councils have by-laws that were written in pre-COVID times. These by-laws might say that voting persons need to be physically present at a meeting for their vote to count. During the time frame when meetings cannot happen in person, Councils should amend their by-laws to permit remote attendance.

Individuals running for a position should not be staffing the election table or the electronic voting method

AFTER THE ELECTION

Announce names of elected council members to the school community within 30 days of the election via as many communication methods as possible.

Hold the first meeting within 35 calendar days of the school year and elect your executive positions. A recommended practice is to hold the first meeting the same day as the election – this will satisfy both timeline (30-day election and 35 day meeting) requirements.

SCHOOL COUNCIL CRITICAL TIMELINES

Time period:	Actions:
May/June	School council election committee is established
June	School council election timelines are established and communicated, including the date, time and location of the election to be held in the fall. Nomination forms are developed School council chairs communicate the plan to the principal
Mid-August	Principal communicates the election plan and timelines as well as applicable forms (e.g., nomination forms) to the parent community. This information must be provided at least 14 days before the election.
Early September	School principal posts school council election information in materials using a platform that is accessible to all parents. Parents return nomination forms to the school.
Mid to end of September	Ballot box is prepared for the election and arrangements are made for volunteers to help with the election The election of the teacher, non-teacher, student representatives may take place at the same time or shortly after the election of the parent representatives
Late September to early October	First meeting of the school council takes place and meeting dates, times and locations for the upcoming year are determined. (The first meeting of the new school council must take place within the first 35 days of the start of school). The names of the new school council members are shared with the school community within 30 days of the election as are the meeting dates, times, and locations of school council meetings for the year
October - June	Regularly scheduled meetings with agendas, minutes, and ongoing communications

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

School Council Meeting dates and times should be communicated to the membership and school at large via a **variety of methods** which can include:

- ☐ Include details in the monthly calendar on the **school newsletter**
- ☐ Direct email or **School Messenger** facilitated by the Principal
- ☐ Include on the **school sign**
- ☐ **School website** – highlight meetings as well as council’s activities and accomplishments, facilitated by the Principal
- ☐ Caregiver **engagement events** based on areas of interest identified by caregivers
- ☐ Set up **table at school events** (Kindergarten Orientation, Open House, etc.)
- ☐ **Social media** (standards tags are suggested by HWDSB – see Appendix???)

AGENDAS

The agenda is the responsibility of the school chair and co-chair with input from other members and school administration. The purpose is to outline what is intended to be discussed and in what order and a timeframe for the discussion. Agenda items should reflect the concerns and interests of the school community. A Sample School Council Agenda is available in [Appendix 1](#). A Sample Principals’ Report is available in [Appendix 2](#).

MEETING FACILITATION

Usually the Chair will lead the membership through the agenda items in order. Some chairs will delegate various portions of the meeting to others.

MINUTES

To help keep the membership informed, minute should be taken, edited/reviewed, and share back to the membership. Each School Council will determine who should be tasked with this important job.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE SCHOOL COUNCIL

Communication – knowing the demographics of the school community will help determine a communication plan and if there is a need to reach out to diverse communities

Language – Does the language used in outreach communication meet the language and reading needs of our target groups? How might translations of documents support your school community? To access supports for translated services, consult with the Principal.

Varied communication methods – Newsletters, social media, school sign

Meeting Dates – be aware of days of religious significance. HWDSB publishes these dates and posts them at: <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/elementary/plan-for-school/calendar/dos/>

Alternate opportunities – consider how to gather input from groups and individuals who are unable to attend events and activities that are scheduled at a specific time?

What barriers might exist? – Consider time or location of meeting, technology requirements and access to tech support, childminding availability, agenda reflecting the needs of the community. What options does the School Council have that could reduce barriers and allow more people to participate?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

School Councils can expect, minimally, an annual update from the Principal about the School Plan. School Councils may also contribute ideas and consult with the Principal about the plan. The Plan will align with the Board Strategic Plan and related Ministry initiatives.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN?

The School Improvement Plan is a roadmap that supports the changes needed to improve the level of student learning and achievement as well as students' sense of belonging and well-being.

The School Improvement Plan is strategic. It helps principals, teachers, and school councils answer important questions: What is the most urgent student learning need to focus on? What needs to be addressed to improve student well-being?

School plans are guided by [HWDSB Strategic Directions](#) and are informed using reliable student achievement data that helps determine and respond to student need.

A school plan is also a mechanism through which the public can hold schools accountable for student success and through which it can measure improvement.

A crucial role of developing a School Improvement Plan is involving all stakeholders, including teachers, school councils, parents, and other community members. Stakeholders work together to gather and

analyze information about the school and its students. Through this process, what needs to be focused on is determined.

As the plan is implemented, schools continue to gather data and monitoring impact of strategies and measuring the impact of the success of their improvement and making revisions as needed.

SCHOOL COUNCILS AND FUNDRAISING

Many School Councils are active in fundraising activities in the name of the school and, as such, are required to conform to the appropriate sections of Regulation 612 in the Education Act that deals with fundraising issues.

NOTE: Until further notice all 2020-2021 fundraising activities in schools are paused. This includes activities such as product sales, pizza days, and packaged food orders.

The following information is provided as a guide when fundraising activities are permitted to resume.

FUNDRAISING GUIDELINES

Ownership of School Council Funds – The Ministry of Education’s document, *School Councils: A Guide for Members* (2002), states “School Councils should be aware that, because the school board is a corporate entity and the school is not, any funds raised by the school council (and any assets purchased with those funds) belong, legally, to the board.” Fundraising for schools by School Councils is a collaboration between the school, the Board and the fundraising group. View the full document at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council.

The Administrative Memorandum: Procedures for School Generated Funds addresses the recording and reporting of School Generated Funds. It is not intended to replace the decision-making process that currently exists at the school regarding the generation and/or expenditure of funds. School councils can continue to raise funds and make decisions about the use of funds in the same way as before. The Assistant Deputy Minister, Business and Finance Division from the Ministry of Education sent a memo to all School Boards in 2004 to clarify this issue. See [Appendix 4](#) for additional information.

Please see our School Generated Funds Procedure at www.hwdsb.on.ca/about/policies/

All fundraising activities and expenditures must be conducted in accordance with Board policies, Ministry guidelines and municipal regulations. School Council activities must also align with the Annual School Fundraising Plan, prepared by the Principal. Particular attention needs to be paid to policies on procurement, conflicts of interest, fundraising and other similar policies. This is clearly stated in Regulation 612, section 22 to the Education Act. Information relating to the purpose of the fundraising activity and expenditures incurred from the proceeds should be clearly communicated to the parents.

Banking Procedures – School Councils should not have a separate bank account. All deposits and disbursements should flow through the school bank account. The School Council designate does not have signing authority on the school bank account for expenditures that will be charged to School Council funds. Any expenditure of School Council monies, particularly fundraising proceeds, requires the approval of the School Council. To facilitate the payment for ongoing activities such as the payments for pizza purchased for resale on a Pizza Day, the School Council may authorize activities for which funds can be disbursed and reported at the next council meeting. Other disbursements, particularly those where fundraising proceeds will be spent, would require School Council approval prior to the initiation of the purchase. The section in this manual dealing with Banking/Receipts/ Disbursements also applies to School Council accounts. For the security of the funds and to protect anyone handling money raised through School Council activities, all money needs to be counted and kept in the school for prompt deposit to the school bank account. Requests for disbursements from School Council funds must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation and approved by the Principal. Any purchases made with School Council funds must also follow the Board's Procurement Policy and Policy Directive.

Financial Reporting Requirements – Information in the form of monthly summary reports outlining the sources and uses of the funds and the current financial position of the School Council should be provided by the school for fundraising activities. The monthly summary report should be presented at the School Council meeting and the minutes should note that it was received and approved. The school should ensure this information is shared with School Council on a regular basis. The report must be in summary format and should not detail funds received by any members of the school community for privacy reasons. Regulation 612, section 24, of the Education Act, states that "every School Council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the School Principal of the school and to the Board." It further states, "If the School Council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities." The School Council may wish to use the Detailed Transaction Summary Report to meet this reporting requirement. In some schools, separate groups such as a parent teacher association administer fundraising activities. These groups, as subcommittees of the School Council, must follow the same processes prescribed for School Councils.

Record Retention – Regulation 612, section 16, of the Education Act, states that "(1) A School Council shall keep minutes of its meetings and records of all of its financial transactions." "(2) The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person." "(3) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to minutes and records that are more than four years old." As a matter of consistency with other financial record retention requirements, all records are to be maintained on

Board premises for a period of seven years. Caution School Councils are reminded that Regulation 612 of the Education Act governs their activities, responsibilities and reporting requirements. Principals should monitor School Council activities to ensure compliance with the Regulation or Board policies and procedures.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING PLAN

The Annual School Fundraising Plan shows the purpose to which the net proceeds of fundraising will be applied, how the funds are intended to be raised, the amounts projected to be raised and the associated fund raising costs. The Plan must comply with the Ministry and Board fundraising guidelines and procedures.

The Plan will be prepared at the beginning of the school year by the Principal, after seeking sufficient and appropriate input from the school community. The purpose of the Plan is to identify the activities that will take place, ensure that they are in accordance with Board policies, aligned with the School Improvement Plan and to determine at the end of the year if the expectations were met.

The Plan will include all money generated in the name of or under the auspices of the school, regardless of its source or use and indicate the following:

- The purpose for which the net proceeds will be used.
- The source of revenue.
- The time period during which it will be generated.
- The person or group responsible for the activity.
- The anticipated net proceeds.

A copy of the Annual School Fundraising Plan will be signed by the Principal and reviewed and approved by the Superintendent of Student Achievement at the start of the school year. The Superintendent of Student Achievement, or designate, should review the Plan, make any necessary adjustments and communicate those adjustments to the Principal.

The Principal has limited flexibility to modify this plan during the year in order to meet the needs of the school. A copy of the approved Plan will be kept in the school and used in conjunction with the review of the monthly and annual financial reports. It is suggested that the approved Plan be communicated to the school community. The purpose of fundraising initiatives should be communicated to the school community prior to any funds being raised.

APPENDIX 1 – Sample School Council Agenda

School Agendas are developed by Chairs and Principals and may follow a format that best suits the group. Here is a sample agenda that can be adapted for the needs and topics of a School Council.

AGENDA

School Council Meeting
ABC Public School
October 21, 2020, 7 p.m., School Library

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
2. Introduction of members
3. *(if this is the first meeting of the year, it is advisable to provide an overview of the scope and role of school council)*
4. Review and Approval of previous meeting minutes (business might arise from previous minutes that will be added to the agenda)
5. Review and Approval of current Agenda *(deadline for agenda items previously communicated through Chair communication)
6. Guest Speaker (if a guest speaker is invited, have them speak before discussion of old and new business)
7. Business from previous meeting
8. Reports (Chair's Report, Principal's Report, Treasure Report, Student Council Report, Teacher's Report, any other reports as determined by bylaws)
9. School Improvement Plan
10. Next Meeting Date, time and location (dates are pre-determined at the start of the year)
11. Adjournment

Until further notice, for the 2020-2021 year, the 'location' of a School Council Meeting will be online.

Tips to consider when creating an Agenda:

- ☐ If a meeting will be conducted online, indicate this 'location' in the Agenda
- ☐ Personalize the Agenda with your School's logo or letterhead. The Principal can provide a letterhead template including the HWDSB branding bar across the bottom of the page.
- ☐ Always include a Land Acknowledgement at the start of a meeting. See [Appendix 9](#) for the text that is most often used in HWDSB meetings.
- ☐ Offer context about the role of School Council as necessary, especially if new people join meetings.
- ☐ Communicate in advance a method and date for people to offer agenda items to the Chair
- ☐ If a guest speaker is on the agenda, schedule this person's talk prior to any discussions about old and new business.
- ☐ Reports from various members can appear in any order that serves the group best
- ☐ Make the Agenda available in multiple formats that reach your school audience (print, emailed copy, posted copy on website, social media links).

APPENDIX 2 – Sample Principal’s Report

The Principal’s Report can be a helpful opportunity for School Council members to receive an update about specific school initiatives and activities. It is often a prompt for School Council members to pose questions and engage in offering suggestions and ideas.

Some Principals offer a verbal report only, and others give a simple outline. And others may want a more formal option such as this sample report shown below.

INSERT SCHOOL LOGO HERE



ABC SCHOOL

ABC PUBLIC SCHOOL

PROUD SCHOOL OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

123 Any Street
Hamilton, Ontario L9G 3K3
Phone: 905.648.4468
Fax: 905.648.8228

EMAIL: abc.school@hwdsb.on.ca
PRINCIPAL: Ms. B. Kind
VICE-PRINCIPAL: Ms. S. Fernwood & Mr. M. Croase
www.hwdsb.on.ca/abc.school

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

School Council Meeting
September 21, 2020, 7 p.m., School Library

Health and Safety

- Covid Protocols update and opportunity for School Council feedback
- “We Help” Strategy: What Parents and Caregivers Need to Know

People

- Staffing Update (Introducing new teachers and Vice-Principal)

School Annual Plan

- Overview of HWDSB Strategic Direction
- Reading A-Z – staff presentation
- Math – Resource Number Talks, PA Day focussed on Numeracy, Family Math Night in February
- Positive Culture and Well Being – Buddy Bench, Believe in Achieving, Validation/Emotion Coaching Lunch and Learn

Plant/Facilities

- Bags of leaves
- New Manual focussed on enhancing our environment
- Accommodation Review – updates on our school website and the board website
- Night lighting in the parking lot

Partnerships (with families and the community)

- Reading in the home
- Bus etiquette
- Nutrition Partners

curiosity.

creativity.

possibility.

HW

Tips to consider when creating a Principal's Report:

- ☐ Personalize the report with your School's logo or letterhead.
- ☐ Offer meeting attendees a print copy in addition to digital copies.
- ☐ Offer context about the role of School Council as an advisory group to the Principal.
- ☐ Invite member input and feedback.

The School Council Chair and Principal should collaborate ahead of a meeting to identify any items from the previous meeting that may require Principal action. Together, anticipate topics that members will want to know about

Remember, the Principal must annually present the HWDSB Strategic Direction and align the School Improvement Plan with the HWDSB plan. It is common for the Principal to provide this information early in the school year and at one of the first School Council meetings of the year.

APPENDIX 3 – Sample School Council Nomination Forms

Below is a sample letter to parents/guardians and a School Council Nomination Form that can be shared with your school community in print or electronic form.



123 Any Street
Hamilton, Ontario L9G 3K8
Phone: 905.648.4468
Fax: 905.648.8228

EMAIL: abcschool@hwdsb.on.ca
PRINCIPAL: Ms. B. Kinderly
VICE-PRINCIPAL: Ms. S. Fernwood & Mr. M. Crouse
www.hwdsb.on.ca/abcschool

September 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Every school in Ontario is required to have a School Council to work collaboratively with the principal to improve student achievement and to enhance accountability of the school with parents. Information about School Councils can be found here:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>.

We welcome all parents/guardians who are willing to volunteer their time to participate on our School Council for the 2020-2021 school year. Typically, School Councils meet in person on a regular basis to discuss school-wide interests and to make recommendations to the principal, however, this year, due to Public Health considerations, meetings will be held virtually.

School Councils must hold annual elections to identify voting members and various positions such as School Council Chair. Elected members vote on School Council matters and represent the group's ideas and advisory suggestions for the Principal. Please note that you do not have to be an elected member of School Council to attend meetings. All meetings are open to all parents/guardians who wish to attend.

To declare your interest to become an elected member on School Council, please complete the **nomination form** below. You may also nominate another parent/guardian of a student at our school to become an elected School Council member. All nominations forms must be received by [insert deadline date prior to first School Council meeting]. Please note that you must attend the meeting on [insert date of first School Council meeting] in order to be elected to Council. Our first meeting of this school year will be held virtually on [Insert date and time] via MS TEAMS. Please join us at [link, phone contact and conference identification number].

Please consider joining us on School Council as an elected or general member. School Council involvement is a great way to support your child's education and we look forward to working together.

Sincerely, |

[insert name of current chair/co-chair] and [insert principal name]

[SCHOOL NAME] SCHOOL COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM - 2020-2021**SELF-NOMINATION**

I would like to join School Council as an elected member. I understand that an elected position requires more involvement and responsibilities than a general member does. I understand that this role involves attending School Council meetings.

My Name: _____

My Phone: _____

My E-mail: _____

I am interested in serving in one of the following School Council roles (please circle):

CHAIR CO-CHAIR TREASURER SECRETARY MEMBER AT LARGE OTHER

I am the parent/guardian of _____ [student name] who is currently registered in Grade ____ at [insert school name].

I am an employee of HWDSB (please circle): YES NO

NOMINATION OF ANOTHER CANDIDATE

Nominator's Name: _____

Nominee's Name: _____

Nominee's Phone: _____

Nominee's Email: _____

Suggested School Council roles for the nominee (please circle):

CHAIR CO-CHAIR TREASURER SECRETARY MEMBER AT LARGE OTHER

The nominee is the parent/guardian of _____, who is currently registered in Grade ____ at [insert school name].

Is the nominee an employee of HWDSB? (please circle): YES NO

Please complete and return this form to the school office by [insert date]

APPENDIX 4 – Fundraising rules, checklists, and forms

Note: For the 2020-2021 school year, all fundraising plans are paused.

School Councils should review the [HWDSB Fundraising](#) guidelines, which state that fundraising activities in Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will:

- ☐ Be complementary to publicly funded education.
- ☐ Be voluntary
- ☐ Provide a safe environment for students, staff and volunteers
- ☐ Be accountable and transparent

Full details may be found here:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/FINAL-Fundraising-March2019.pdf>



Note: Funds raised by School Councils are called 'School Generated Funds (SGF)'. In partnership with the Principal and authorized school personnel, School Council will account for SGF funds in accordance with this SGF Guide.



PROCEDURES for School Generated Funds



. For complete information, read the Procedures Guide here:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Procedures-for-School-Generated-Funds-1.pdf>

APPENDIX 5 – MS TEAMS Technical ‘how-to’ Guide

At times when School Councils cannot gather in-person at the school, they can meet remotely and invite people to attend via an internet enabled device (cell phone, tablet, or computer). HWDSB uses Microsoft Teams as a platform for groups to meet and collaborate from various locations outside of the school building.

Microsoft Teams is widely used by students across HWDSB in all grades during the months of school closure in the Spring of 2020, and in the re-opening of schools in Fall 2020. The features that support effective classroom learning are the same features that School Councils can use to have effective meetings.

The following checklists can assist principals and School Councils in plan, communicate, and facilitate remote meetings using Microsoft Teams.

Communicating School Council Meetings and Access

Prior to the meeting, the School Council Chair, through the Principal can use Microsoft Teams to:

- ☐ **Communicate** the election plan, timelines, and other relevant information for remote school council meetings as they would for in-person school council meetings (see [School Council Critical Timelines](#))
- ☐ **Include information** regarding Microsoft Teams with their school community, including information on how to download the app for desktop and/or mobile devices. The link <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ca/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/download-app> provides access to applicable download software.
- ☐ **Invite** members of the school community to the remote school council meeting via the calendar feature in Outlook (HWDSB e-mail platform) or in Microsoft Teams.

Microsoft Teams Tips:

- ☐ **Invite** people through an Outlook email account since mailing lists are not functional in Microsoft Teams. See diagram below.
- ☐ **Set up a meeting** in an Outlook and select the date and time. Then **enable the “Teams Meeting”** function within the “Search for a room or location” area of the calendar invite. Recipients will then receive via email a link to join the Microsoft Teams meeting. They will be able to click on the link and join the meeting via their desktop or mobile device or via a call-in phone number and specific ID listed in the email.
- ☐ **Offer** additional information in the email invitation such as the agenda, contact information, or a way to ask questions.
- ☐ **Provide both the call in and conference ID number** for the Microsoft Teams meeting for parents who may not have internet access and/or prefer to access the remote school council meeting using a phone. Principals can provide this call-in number and conference ID number via other

communication means (e.g., phone call, written correspondence) should individuals not have access to the internet.

- ❑ **Ask** school support staff (e.g., YMCA SWIS workers, Student Success Leads) to reach out to parents who may need help joining the meeting. They may need interpreters, tech help, access to devices, or other supports.

How to set up a Microsoft Teams Meeting

When your meeting is all set up, click SEND.

Title of your meeting

Enter the addresses of all the people you want to invite. If you have a mail list, use it here to save time.

Set the time, date, and location (which will be virtual)

You can attach an Agenda or write a note in the text box.

Click here to make this calendar entry a TEAMS event. This will generate a link that recipients will click in order to attend

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Teams meeting creation window. The title is "School Council Meeting". The invitees listed are abc@home.com, wonderfulparent@home.com, fantasticmom@gmail.com, and letmejoincouncil@hotmail.com. The date is 9/22/2020, from 6:30 PM to 7:00 PM. The location is set to "Virtual Meeting". The "Teams meeting" toggle is turned on. A text box at the bottom contains a welcome message: "Welcome to School Council. Please come to our next meeting. If you have questions, please call the school at 905-646-448." The right side of the window shows a calendar view for Tuesday, September 22, 2020, with a green bar indicating the meeting time from 6:30 PM to 7:00 PM.

APPENDIX 6 – How to facilitate virtual conversations and meetings in MS Teams

Establish Virtual Meeting Norms

School Council Chairs, with the support of the Principal as necessary, can help attendees have a positive meeting experience by following a few norms. The following ‘best practices’ can be communicated ahead of time, perhaps with the Agenda, and they can be restated and demonstrated in the meeting. Some parents will come with a great deal of experience with virtual meetings, and for others, this may be their first time. A diagram below shows part of the screen during a virtual meeting.

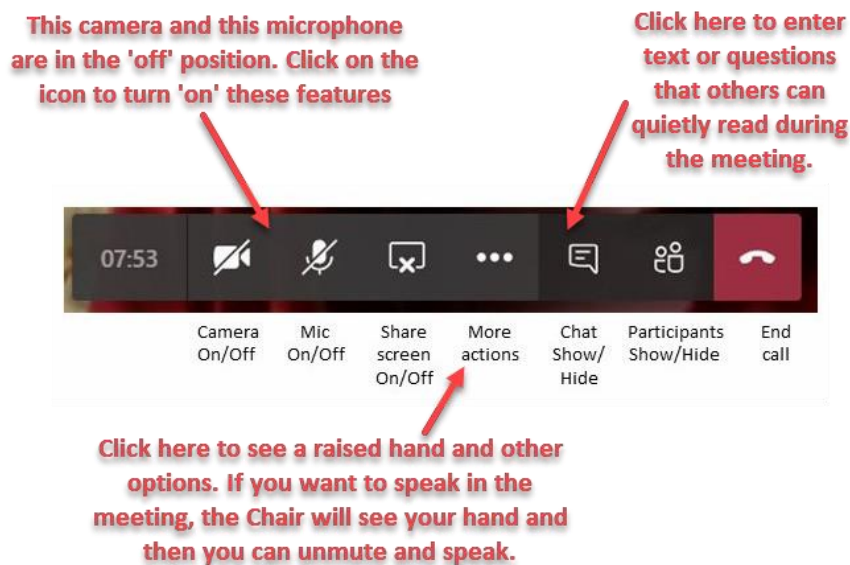
Turn off your camera (to limit bandwidth usage and for privacy considerations) Note: This is recommended for initial entry into meetings and councils may wish to establish their use of video once their councils are established. Participants should always have the option to use video if they wish.

Mute your microphone (to limit background noise / interference).

Use the chat feature or **raise your hand** virtually should you wish to contribute to the meeting dialogue.

Do not record the meeting for privacy reasons. Assure attendees that School Council meeting minutes will be shared with the school community, just as they would for in-person meetings.

Features of a Microsoft Teams Meeting screen toolbar



APPENDIX 7 – How to conduct virtual elections

Microsoft Forms is the preferred tool for HWDSB schools to conduct 2020-21 School Council elections. Please follow the steps below to use the resources that HWDSB has developed. Remember, this is a two-stage process: first, schools form their School Council, and then, School Council members elect their leadership positions.

Step One

Solicit nominations from your school community, for School Council membership, using the nomination form included in this handbook. Share widely through your school's communication channels.

Step Two

Review nominations to determine if you need to hold a virtual election (i.e. more applications than your Constitution/By-Laws allow for) for council membership. If you need to hold a virtual election, contact Rob Faulkner (rfaulkne@hwdsb.on.ca) for support.

Step Three

Conduct the virtual election and inform the school community of the membership.

Step Four

Share with your school council members details about the first School Council meeting and the election of leadership positions, by council members. (See possible web post template below.)

Web Post: Election of School Council Membership for 2020-21

*We are excited to announce that our first School Council meeting and School Council election will be held **DATE**.*

This is a great opportunity to help guide our school's direction. At this meeting, school council members will elect council leadership positions.

Meeting details: Microsoft Teams URL etc.

Step Five

At this inaugural MS Teams meeting, please introduce the voting process and share with School Council members the names of the people running for School Council leadership positions.

Step Six

When you are ready to open the voting process, use the Teams chat to share the URL for the secret ballot. (For security purposes, this link can be found in the Oct. 2, 2020, principal's memo re: School Council Elections.)

.

Step Seven

Analyze and announce results at URL. (For security purposes, this link can be found in the Oct. 2, 2020, principal's memo re: School Council Elections.)

Note that the form requires that voters select their school from a dropdown list, and then type the names of the people they seek to elect.

IIT has provided principals with access to the form, so they can see results and announce their council's leadership team.



The screenshot shows a web form titled "School Council Election 2020-21" on a blue background. The form is white and contains the following text:

School Council Election 2020-21

We are excited to open voting for our School Council's leadership positions. This is a great opportunity for council members to step into roles that will help guide our council. A list of candidates will be shared at the meeting during which voting will occur.

Please note:

- This election is conducted by secret ballot (your personal information is not attached to your vote).
- Only parents or guardians of a student enrolled at the school can vote.
- All eligible voters may cast one vote for each parent position.
- Voters must attend the meeting on the election day(s) during the hours of the election.
- Attendance should be taken at this meeting, to account for number of voting individuals.

Below the notes, there are three required fields:

1. School Name *
Select your answer [dropdown menu]
2. Enter your selection for Chair *
Enter your answer [text box]
3. Enter your selection for Co-Chair *
[text box]

APPENDIX 8 – Communications strategies, tips, and good practices

Communicating with parents/guardians, the community, and school staff is an important role of School Council Chairs and other elected members. The following methods of sharing information are all available to School Council.

SCHOOL COUNCIL EMAIL ADDRESS

All School Councils have an HWDSB-created email address that should be used by the School Council Chair. The standard protocol for this address is as follows. An initial password will be provided which can then be changed.

schoolnameSC@hwdsb.on.ca

SCHOOL WEBSITE

All HWDSB schools have a website that follow HWDSB standards. To post information to the website, School Councils should provide content to the Principal who will then ensure that the messages are posted. School website addresses follow this pattern:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/schoolname/>

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/highview/>

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/ancasterhigh/>

SCHOOL MESSENGER

All HWDSB schools have a School Messenger service which can be configured to send personal and public messages to parents and guardians. A personal message can, for example, provide information about a child's attendance. A public message is a communication to the entire school community, or even a specific segment of the school, depending on the audience. For example, an invitation to a Grade 9 Information Night can go just to Grade 9 parents. An invitation to attend the next School Council meeting could go to all families, all grades. A message to parents about Grade 8 Graduation could go just to the Grade 8 families.

School Messenger can be set up to send **phone** messages (to the number parents/guardians have provided as their primary contact). It can also send **emails**, and it can include attachments. School Councils may request that the Principal use School Messenger for both phone or email messages or both, to try and connect with as many people as possible.

DIRECT EMAIL

School Council Chairs or other members may wish to communicate directly to specific parents/guardians, many of whom voluntarily provide their contact information to the School Council. School Council Chairs should consider using the official School Council email address for these communications. Direct email is often used for distribution of Agendas and Minutes.

SCHOOL OUTDOOR SIGN

All HWDSB schools have an outdoor sign on campus with options to update an LED portion of the sign with short timely messages. To use the sign, School Councils should determine what messages should go to the entire community. Provide this information to the Principal who will make sure that the sign is updated.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Many parents/guardians connect with others via their own social media platforms and identities. In addition, HWDSB has provided for each School Council a standard format for social media messages. HWDSB has also provided standard formats for Schools. To communicate well, via social media, School Councils can reference the following examples:

Each school has standard formats for social media tags on Twitter and Instagram

@[Schoolname]_HWDSB or #[Schoolname]_HWDSB

Example: @Ancaster_HWDSB or #Huntington_HWDSB

NEWSLETTERS AND FLYERS

Some families may not have internet access. To reach as many people as possible, School Councils can work with the Principal to send home print documents and/or post documents and flyers at the school.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

HWDSB uses Microsoft TEAMS as its virtual meeting platform. School Councils can meet and message via this platform and host chats, share documents, and conduct business. See [Appendix 5](#) for more details.

WE HELP

HWDSB provides an anonymous communication strategy for all community members, including parents/guardians to share observations or perhaps concerns. While School Council is not authorized to see these messages directly, it is helpful for School Council to remind parent/guardians that this method of communicating to the school and others is available. The Principal will receive the messages and, if relevant, will then share information with School Council. Students are the most frequent users of WE HELP, but School Councils can promote this service for everyone in the community. To connect anonymously with **WE HELP, text 905-963-0066.**

APPENDIX 9 – HWDSB Land Acknowledgement

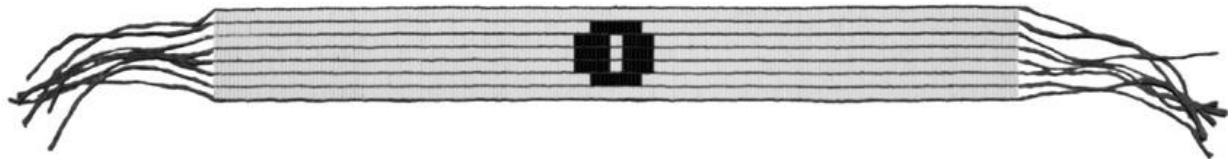
The following text is often used at HWDSB gatherings.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board acknowledges our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty.

The intent of this agreement is for all nations sharing this territory to do so responsibly, respectfully and sustainably in perpetuity.

We respect the longstanding relationships with the local Indigenous communities, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River.

Note: All HWDSB schools have been given a wampum (see below) and use it as a teaching and learning tool, agreeing to keep it visible, accessible and safe for all to use. It reminds us of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty and helps students, staff, and community members broaden our understanding of HWDSB's commitment to Indigenous education. Indigenous knowledge has historically been excluded and marginalized in Canada. Ontario and HWDSB have committed to working with Indigenous partners in education, with a focus on closing the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. School Councils can be part of this learning.



APPENDIX 10 – Additional Resources and Links

HWDSB School Council Modules

<http://bit.ly/31edFas>

School Administrator's Guide to Parent Engagement, by Ontario Principals' Council

<https://bit.ly/2MKHwls>

Ministry of Education: School Councils - A Guide for Members

<https://bit.ly/2tgW5IK>