

April 2023



Amber Aquin

Welcome to The PIC Connection, the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)

Newsletter for School Councils.

A Message from Mike:

Welcome to our April edition of the PIC connection. April has proven to be an interesting month weather wise. While going to a meeting at the board I left my vehicle in the pouring rain, looked outside during the meeting and snow was coming down side ways and finally when I picked my kids up from school the sun was shining, crazy! In this edition it is with pleasure we introduce Amber Aquin. She works as the HWDSB Engagement Officer. Sharing the knowledge will focus on creating Bylaws this month. We are happy to announce the addition of a new feature, listing School Council Sponsored Events that are open to the public. If your council is hosting an event that you would like to open up to more parents send us the details and we will list your event. If you have a link to a poster or website, send it and we will include the link.

Please feel free to reach out to Amanda or me anytime. pic@hwdsb.on.ca.

Mike Palma Chair of the Parent Involvement Committee

A Message from Amber:

Hi team – My name is Amber, and I am the HWDSB Engagement Officer within the Communications and Community Engagement Department. One thing in life I am incredibly passionate about, that drives me personally and professionally, is people. People are at the heart of my work, and at the heart of what brings me joy in life.

The Community Engagement Department serves as a resource to both the school community and the broader Hamilton community. Our role is to support connections and unique opportunities for students across the system. Every day is different in our office, but you can usually find me meeting with a community organization or chatting with a student about a great idea they have for their class!

Advice I often give to students when I work with them, is to get to know those around you beyond their roles. I would extend the same message to parents and caregivers, staff, the community, and all involved in our important work. This is true engagement. Parent Engagement is a great opportunity to gather diverse voices and share unique ideas. The HWDSB community is full of incredible people with stories to tell. It is a privilege to hear these stories.

So, who am I? What excites me and inspires me? I am an avid athlete that loves sports, an anchor that has grounded me and taught me invaluable lessons throughout my life. I volunteer on the Board of Directors as the Women's Director for the Burlington Centaurs Rugby Club, promoting leadership opportunities for girls and women in sport. I find joy in time with family and friends, being in nature, and love all things food related. I look forward to meeting you all, and learning about what brings YOU joy in your own life!

Amber Aquin

Communications & Community Engagement Update:

Trustee Update

During the Trustee Update, Trustee Buck shared a small recap of Hamilton Foundation for Student Success' (HFSS) Showcase of heARTS event. The purpose of Showcase of heARTS is to celebrate student talent while raising funds for HWDSB students. HFSS is proud to share that thanks to the generosity of the community, Showcase of heARTS 2023 was able to raise roughly \$58,000 for HWDSB students! This money will help fund Student Support Grants, which provide financial assistance to HWDSB students for school-related expenses and basic personal needs. [Click here to read more and watch the recording.](#)

Strategic Direction Consultation

It's time for HWDSB to set new Strategic Directions that will identify future values, priorities, and goals. Strategic Planning is goal setting and goal mapping for a school board. A strategic plan must identify goals that are consistent with the organization's overall vision. [Click here to learn more about Strategic Planning 2023.](#)

HWDSB is currently looking for 20 community members to join a Co-Design Workshop to help shape the forthcoming Strategic Directions. The Co-Design Workshop will be an interactive and collaborative event where everyone has a chance to contribute their ideas, share local knowledge, and come up with a collective vision. [Click here to learn how to apply](#).

Thank you to the PIC members who shared Strategic Planning feedback and ideas at the April 11 meeting.

***** Check out The PIC CONNECTION Newsletters and other support for School Council members at <https://hwdsb.info/SchoolCouncil> *****

Sharing the knowledge: Creating Bylaw's / Terms Of Reference (TOR)

Ministry of Education

School councils are not required to develop lengthy constitutions, since Ontario Regulation 612/00 sets out the mandate and roles and responsibilities for school councils. In effect, the regulation serves as the constitution for the school council. (If a school council already has a constitution in place, the council may wish to continue to use it, provided that it does not conflict with the provisions of the regulation.) Similarly, in the presence of the regulation, boards are not required to develop policies on school councils, except for policies dealing with the reimbursement of expenses incurred by members and officers of school councils while conducting council business, policies on fund-raising, and policies that address the resolution of internal conflict on a school council. Boards are, however, required to consult with school councils when developing these policies. While boards may want to facilitate the work of councils that are developing the required school council bylaws, they are not required to do so. School councils must develop certain bylaws to provide them with direction for the operation of council business and to help the council work effectively. The development of operating bylaws should begin as soon as possible after a council meets for the first time. At a minimum, the regulation requires councils to develop bylaws to address the following areas:

- election procedures
- filling vacancies
- conflict of interest
- conflict resolution procedures

Bylaws governing other areas of operation may also be developed.

Once bylaws have been developed, your school council may want to review them from time to time, although they do not need to be rewritten each year. Conflict resolution bylaws must be established in accordance with any applicable policies established by the board.

Your council may also wish to develop bylaws related to the following:

- a school council code of ethics (see the sample under "School Council Code of Ethics" in Section 5: Effective School Councils)

- general expectations regarding meetings (e.g., attendance, promptness)

- the number and scheduling of meetings (at least four meetings must be held each school year)

- the number of parent members on the council and the number of members required for a quorum (in compliance with Ontario Regulation 612/00)

- the number, description, and duties of executive officers

- any requirements regarding signing officers



the establishment and roles of committees
a process for seeking input from the community

It is important to ensure that bylaws created by the school council do not conflict with any of the provisions of Ontario Regulation 612/00.

Creating Bylaw's / Terms of Reference (TOR) Best Practices:

- Bylaw's can be short and to the point or contain detailed information as long as they don't conflict with the Ministry Regulation 612/00 and HWDSB policies.
- Bylaws should be created with input from all council members and once completed be voted on for approval.
- Bylaws must contain the following: election procedures; filling vacancies; conflict of interest; conflict resolution procedures.
- Bylaws may also contain but are not limited to: mission statement; goals of council; land acknowledgement will be read at the start of all meetings; bylaws will be read at the first meeting of the years; how will meeting dates be determined; description of how meeting will be conducted (meeting format); maximum number of voting members; rolls of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Voting Members; sub committees; fundraising; absenteeism with out sending regrets; quorum; code of ethics; how often bylaws will be reviewed; number of members voting to change bylaws; council chair submitting an annual report of council actions throughout the year.
- A sample bylaw will be provided at the end of the newsletter. Councils may modify it to fit their needs while staying within the ministry requirements Ontario Regulation 612/00 and HWDSB policies.

HWDSB School Council Events:

1. **Happy Parents, Happy Kids:** Ann Douglas
Cootes Paradise Elementary School
900 King St W, Hamilton, ON L8S 1K6
Thursday, June 8, 2023 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Up and Coming:

- **PIC Connects** Tuesday, May 23, 2023 Viola Desmond Elementary School 50 Secord Drive, Hamilton 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. An information evening for all school council members.
- Next month The PIC Connection will share best practices for recruiting new School Council members.
- Our next PIC meeting will be on Tuesday 09, May 2023 at the Education Centre 6:30 – 8:30
- All PIC meetings are open to the public and held in a Hybrid Format.



HELPING US, HELP OUR TEENS: ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH

Thursday, April 27th @ 7:00 pm - Dundas Valley Secondary School (in-person)



RSVP Here:



DVSS is hosting Dr. Lindsey George for an evening discussion with parents and caregivers regarding the mental health of teens in our school community.

- ⇒ *What is Mental Health?*
- ⇒ *How Can We Help?*
- ⇒ *Where Can We Get Help?*

All parents and caregivers are welcome to join us for a night of information and open discussion held within a safe and inclusive environment. Please RSVP via the QR code provided. No entrance fee is required.

In closing, thank you for reading the newsletter, created by parents for parents.

Have a topic you would like added or clarified,
drop us a line and let us know. Email pic@hwdsb.on.ca.

*We firmly believe working together we can make HWDSB an even better place to work, learn, play
and grow as staff, parents, guardians, caregivers and students.*

Sample Bylaws / Terms of Reference (TOR)

BYLAWS

OF

(Your School Name Here) Elementary School

Last updated 22 April 2022

Approved by membership on 24 April 2023

Name and Signature of Chair / Co chairs / Vice Chair and Date

Table of Contents (Optional)

Land Acknowledgement will be read at the start of all school council meetings

Name and Address

The name of the council shall be: (Your school's name) School Council followed by the address.

Mission Statement

To act as a liaison between the staff of (School Name) School and the community for the betterment of the students, the school and the educational environment.

Goal

To provide opportunities for students and their families to become involved in the school community and to raise funds to support school council initiatives.

Procedures and Guidelines

The school council will comply with the Ministry of Education laws and regulations, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) policies and the collective agreement between the board and its employees.

For all topics not covered in these by-laws, guidance may be found in Ontario Regulation 612/00 and HWDSB policies.

Code of Ethics (Conduct)

All members of school council will adhere to the code of Ethics / Conduct / Norms & Values found in appendix A

Membership

The number of parents/guardians/caregivers must be greater than all other members combined.

Members of the school council shall include,

- a majority number, to a maximum of 15 (enter the agreed upon number), of parents/guardians/caregivers who have a child enrolled in the school and are not employed by the board at their children's school.
- the school principal,
- a teacher representative who is employed at the school,
- a non-teaching staff member who is employed at the school, and
- a community representative.

Elections

The election process is as follows.

- Elections will be held during the first 30 days of the new school year.

- A date for the next year's elections will be set during the final council meeting of the school year.
- The principal will distribute nominations forms at least 14 days prior to the meeting where elections will take place.
- Only the candidates elected will be announced.

Elections for each position on council will follow the process outlined below.

Parent/Guardian

- A nomination form should be completed and submitted prior to the meeting in which elections will take place.
- Last minute forms may be submitted at the meeting with a valid reason.
- An individual putting their name forward must be in attendance at the meeting in which elections will take place in order to have their name stand.
- If the election of parent members is uncontested the candidates shall be acclaimed.
- The contested election of parent members shall be by secret ballot and follow the steps outlined below,
 - the principal shall conduct a lottery to determine ballot position,
 - the principal shall count the ballots in the presence of at least two persons who are not election candidates, and
 - if there is a tie each candidate shall have the opportunity to give a short oral biography of themselves and then another secret ballot will be carried out.
 -

Executive Members

- A parent/guardian/caregiver's member must be nominated orally and be willing to run for an executive position and may self nominate.
- If the election of an officer is uncontested the candidate shall be acclaimed.
- The contested election of an officer shall be by secret ballot and follow the steps outlined below,
 - the principal shall conduct a lottery to determine ballot position,
 - the principal shall count the ballots in the presence of at least two parent/guardian members who are not candidates running for an office position.
 - if there is a tie each candidate shall have the opportunity to give a short oral biography of themselves and then another secret ballot will be carried out.

Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff

- The principal is not eligible for a teaching or non-teaching staff position.
- A teaching or non-teaching staff candidate may be nominated or self nominated.
- A teaching or non-teaching staff candidate must be in attendance at the meeting in which elections will take place in order to have their name stand.
- If the election of a teaching or non-teaching staff candidate is uncontested, they shall be acclaimed.
- The contested election of a teaching or non-teaching staff candidate shall be by secret ballot and follow the steps outlined below,
 - the principal shall conduct a lottery to determine ballot position,

- the principal shall count the ballots in the presence of at least two parent/guardian members.
- if there is a tie each candidate shall have the opportunity to give a short oral biography of themselves and then another secret ballot will be carried out.

Community Representative

- A community representative may be appointed to council by a majority vote at a meeting of council members.

Vacancies

If a parent/guardian/caregiver member position is vacant it may remain vacant until the next council elections unless the number of parent/guardian/caregiver members are no longer the majority. If there is no longer a majority the school council may request nominations from the school community and follow the election procedures outlined above.

If an executive position is vacant, it shall be filled by following the election procedures outlined above. Current council members only will be permitted to run for the executive position.

If a teaching staff, non-teaching staff or community representative position is vacant it shall be filled by following the election procedures outlined above. Council may continue to function while a teaching staff, non-teaching staff or community representative position is vacant so long as quorum is met.

Length of Terms

The term of parent/guardian/caregiver membership shall be from the date of election/acclamation until after elections are held on the date of the first meeting of council in the following school year.

There is no term limit on the number of times a parent/guardian/caregiver can serve on school council. However, a parent/guardian/caregiver must have a child enrolled in the school to be a member of school council.

Duties

Chair (or Co-Chairs)

- Send notice of meetings (proposed agendas & finalized agendas) to school council members.
- Collaborate with the principal to prepare the agenda for school council meetings.
- Preside over school council meetings.
- Ensure school council minutes are being recorded.
- Ensure records are kept in a place accessible by parents/guardians/caregivers (school office)
- Facilitate the resolution of conflict.
- Communicate with the school community.
- Review all correspondence to the school council, e.g., school council email.
- Act as an ex-officio member of all school council sub committees.
- Maintain school council website working with the school secretary

- Ensure goals and priorities are established for the school year.
- Ensure the regular review of these by-laws.
- Ensure council participates in the school Annual Fundraising Plan with the principal
- Ensure council's participation in the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan.
- Ensure school council completes the annual Principal Review Report
- Ensure the completion of the School Council Annual Report to parents/guardians/caregivers
- Assist with the transfer of all records to incoming chair (or co-chairs).

Vice-Chair

- Assist the chair (or co-chairs).
- Assume the chair (or co-chairs) duties in his/her or their absence at the chair (or co-chairs) request.

Secretary

- Take minutes during meetings.
 - Include a list of attendees, non-attendees and whether or not non-attendees have communicated a reason for their absence.
- Distribute prepared minutes to members at least 1 week prior to the next meeting.
- Post approved minutes in school and on school website within 1 week of approval.
- Be custodian of current year's minutes to be made available during school council meetings.
- Assist with the transfer of all records to incoming secretary.

Treasurer

- Maintain a detailed report containing all income and expenses as well as any future expenses approved by council that can be provided upon request.
- Meet regularly with school secretary to compare notes and ensure the finances agree.
- Inform school secretary on motions approved regarding the spending of council funds.
- Provide a monthly report containing new income and expenses as well as the amount of available funds.
- Provide a year-end detailed report containing all income and expenses as well as any future expenses approved by council to be in the council annual report to Parents/guardians/caregivers
- Be custodian of current year's financial records to be made available during school council meetings.
- Assist with the transfer of all records to incoming treasurer.

Sub Committees

Committees shall contain at least one parent/guardian/caregiver member and may include persons who are not members of council. The council chair (co-chairs) shall act as an ex-officio member of all school council committees.

Meetings

Meeting Occurrence

A council meeting shall take place within the first 35 days of the new school year. A minimum of 4 meetings shall take place each year. A meeting schedule will be determined after elections by council member working with the principal/vice principal schedule. All meetings shall take place in a location accessible to the public.

Notice

The notice of an upcoming meeting shall appear in the school newsletter and be posted on the school council's webpage.

Quorum

Shall be 50% plus 1 of voting members.

Meetings without quorum may take place and items on the agenda may be discussed, but no votes may take place.

Meeting Format

Meetings will observe two formats. Agenda items not involving money will be discussed using a Collaborative format. Votes involving money will observe the Robert's Rules.

Minutes

Minutes must be taken during council meetings. Changes to minutes may be made directly to minutes prior to approval and shall be noted "as corrected". Minutes shall be posted in the school and on the school council website within 7 days of being approved.

Voting

Each member of council is entitled to one vote. Each committee member is entitled to one vote in votes taken by sub committees. The principal is not entitled to a vote.

Fundraising

(As determined by your school council members working with the principal.) Each school will be different depending on your demographics, financial situation of parents/guardians/caregivers and how often you are asking for money. Consideration must also be given to all groups fundraising: school council; home & school association; principal; staff and students. Ask council members are we asking too much from our parents/guardians/caregivers and the community.

Bylaws/Terms of Reference (TOR)

These by-laws shall be reviewed at the first meeting of the year. Each member of council is required to read and sign the Acknowledgment of By-Laws Read Form, which can be found in the appendix B of these by-laws. These by-laws shall be kept on file at the school and made available for viewing on the school council website.

Amendment of Bylaws

The by-laws may be amended as follows:

- A notice shall be sent to parent/guardians/caregivers with the date of the meeting that amendments will be voted on. The notice will include instructions on how to obtain a copy of the current by-law(s) and a copy of the proposed by-law(s).
- A 2/3 vote of all members is required to adopt changes to the by-laws.

Conflict of Interest

A council member must declare a conflict of interest at the earliest possible moment the council member realizes a conflict exists. A council member that has a conflict with respect to an item on the agenda shall leave the meeting room when that item is being discussed.

Conflict Resolution

The chair is responsible for conflict resolution and may look to the principal for guidance. Where the chair is in conflict it will fall to the principal for resolution. If the conflict is with the principal the chair may look to the school's superintendent for resolution. Council members may create their own conflict guidelines or adopt some already created.

Attendance

If a member has communicated to the chair (co-chairs) that they will be unable to attend a meeting for any reason, they will be considered to have missed a meeting with good cause. A member who fails to attend three consecutive council meetings without good cause may be removed from council following the procedure below.

- At a council meeting, a council member may make a motion to begin the process of removing a member for poor attendance.
- Using past meeting minutes, the attendance record will be reviewed by assembled members and a vote will be taken.
- If the motion is approved by two-thirds of the membership, the member is removed from council.

Performance

Council members may be removed from office for not fulfilling their duties outlined in these by-laws by following the procedure outlined below.

- At a membership meeting, a council member may make a motion to begin the process of removing a member from office for not fulfilling their duties.
- The officer shall be given the opportunity to offer an explanation showing good cause which explains their reason for not fulfilling their duties for the school council's consideration.
- Notice must be given to all members that a vote will take place at a specified upcoming meeting.
- If the motion is approved by two-thirds of the membership, the member is removed from office.

Appendix

A Code of Ethics/Norms & Values

(Please refer to March/April edition of The PIC Connection newsletter for a sample form)

Council can create their own list with input and if necessary, voting from all members

B Acknowledgment of By-Laws Read Form

(Create a simple form with headings Name, Date Read and Signature)

