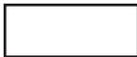
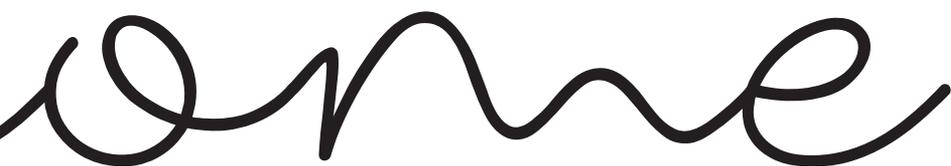


SCHOOL COUNCIL *guide*

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We welcome you to the role of the elected OSSTF/FEESO school council representative on your school's parent council. As elected "Ambassador" of the OSSTF/FEESO and teaching staff of your school, the role of putting forward, in a forthright, informed and professional manner, the concerns and views of the OSSTF/FEESO is an important link in the support of your federation and your colleagues. It is through your representation on the parent council that educational issues that are pertinent to your colleagues, council and community will be discussed.

OSSTF/FEESO provides this booklet as a resource for you in your role as the elected OSSTF/FEESO representative. It is our hope that it will provide a contextual framework for you in this role.

Thank you for acting as the OSSTF/FEESO school council representative at your branch. If there are other ways in which we can assist you in this important role please let us know.

ROLE OF THE FEDERATION REPRESENTATIVE

The primary role of the elected OSSTF/FEESO school council representative is to speak on behalf of either teaching or support staff colleagues. The views of the staff should be expressed in an informed, professional, and assertive manner.

Tasks for the OSSTF/FEESO school council representative:

- Request time on the school council agenda to bring forward issues raised by the staff
- Provide the staff's view as an alternative to that presented by the principal when necessary. When staff agrees with the principal, clearly indicate that consensus has been reached
- Develop a positive relationship with the school council chair(s) and other members of council. Understand the role of school councils by reading this pamphlet and relevant school board policies. Be proactive, as needed, in reminding school council members when a topic is outside their mandate and suggest a more appropriate forum for airing those concerns
- Represent the staff's views and concerns on issues being discussed by the school council. Seek colleagues' opinions and advice through branch meetings or staff meetings. Consult federation materials to understand OSSTF/FEESO's position. Gather supporting documents to explain the staff's positions to school council members
- Inform the staff of school council's agenda and the disposition on matters affecting them
- Contact your branch or workplace representative, or your Bargaining Unit President, as needed, to discuss concerns regarding the school council's activities.

STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Purpose

School councils are advisory bodies of volunteers who work together to provide recommendations to the principal and/ or the school board. The school council is to serve as a link between the school and the community, and to improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system through the active participation of parents.

Role

While school councils may make recommendations on any matter, the school board/school principal has an obligation to solicit their views on matters related to student achievement or accountability to parents, including the following:

- Revision or development of board policies
- Code of conduct and dress code
- Implementation plans for new education initiatives
- Revision or development of action plans for improvement, in response to EQAO test results
- Fundraising activities and policies for school councils
- Reimbursements of expenses for school council members
- Structure and role of school councils
- Conflict resolution procedures for school councils
- Process and criteria for selection and placement of principal and vice principals
- School councils should not discuss personnel issues or refer to a specific teacher or other school employees.

Consultation and reporting school councils must consult with parents about matters under consideration and must submit an annual report on its activities to the principal and the school board. If the council engages in fundraising, the annual report must report on these activities.

The principal must report back to the school council on any action taken on recommendations. As well, the school board must report back on any recommendation they receive from school councils. The Ministry of Education is required to report annually to school council members on education matters.

Membership

A school council shall meet at least four times during the school year and all meetings of the school council are to be open.

All representatives on the school council are to be elected, except the principal and the community representative. Annual elections must be held within the first 30 days of the school year.

The school council consists of:

- Parents/guardians: Parent representatives must represent the majority of members on the council. The exact number of parents can be specified by a school council bylaw or by board policy if there is no bylaw. School board employees are not eligible to be elected as parent members of school councils if they work in the same school that their child attends
- Teacher representative(s)*, elected by teachers
- Support staff representative(s)*, elected by non-teaching staff
- Student representative(s) in high schools, to be appointed by the student council, or elected by the other students if there is no student council community representative(s)*, to be appointed by the school council
- The school principal.

It is expected that the council will represent the diversity of the school community.

Through the active participation of parents, the chairperson must be a parent elected by the council. There may be two parent co-chairs.

** May be more than one as long as parents remain the majority.*

CHRONOLOGY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS IN ONTARIO

SEPTEMBER 1993

Establishment of the Ontario Parent Council (OPC)

September 1993, then Education and Training Minister Dave Cooke appointed eighteen individuals to a new provincial council to advise him on education issues.

JULY 1994

The OPC issues report recommending making school councils mandatory

In July 1994, the OPC recommended that the *Education Act* be changed to mandate that every school have a school council. It further recommended that the council have a clear advisory role in: major decisions regarding the school year; curriculum and program development; the hiring and performance review of teachers, principals and other school staff; approving school budgets; and developing school policy.

JANUARY 1995

The Royal Commission on Learning recommends the establishment of “community councils”

In its report, *For the Love of Learning*, the Royal Commission on Learning recommended the creation of community councils. The Commission’s proposal also included a vision that community councils be connected to the development of schools as the hub “of community support of student learning.”

The Commission did not recommend that community councils have decision-making powers.

FEBRUARY 1995

Education and Training Minister announces the government would mandate school councils.

Education and Training Minister Dave Cooke announced the government would introduce legislation to make advisory school councils mandatory for the 1995/96 school year.

APRIL 1995

Education and Training Minister issues policy memorandum on school councils

As an interim measure, before legislation and regulations were in place, the Minister issued Policy Memorandum Number 122 that outlined how school councils would be established and operate and which issues they would advise on. This policy memorandum formed the basis of the regulations ultimately introduced by the succeeding government.

SEPTEMBER 1997

Bill 160 includes provision to make school councils mandatory

Bill 160 was introduced on September 22, 1997 and included a provision that made it mandatory for school boards to establish school councils at every school.

PPM 122 was still in effect and determined that school councils remained advisory in nature.

MAY 1998

Education Improvement Commission (EIC) issues a discussion paper entitled, *The Future Role of School Councils*.

The paper sought input on whether school councils should remain advisory or granted more responsibility in school decisions.

JUNE 1998

Government amends Regulation to require principals to distribute information to school councils.

The amended regulation further required school principals to publish the names of school council members in a school newsletter to advise parents about who served on their school council.

SEPTEMBER 1998

Education and Training Minister Dave Johnson sends school board a letter regarding school board employees on school councils.

He cited concerns held by the EIC that a disproportionate number of school board employees were sitting on school councils. The EIC never provided data to support its claim and the Minister's letter had no legal standing with respect to teachers or other board employees being on school councils.

NOVEMBER 1998

Education Improvement Commission releases report on school councils.

DECEMBER 1999

Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education conducts consultation on school councils

There continued to be pressure from some parent groups for school councils to have decision-making powers.

Parliamentary Assistant, Mr. Young reported back that the majority of parents believed school councils should remain advisory bodies.

JUNE 2000

Minister of Education announces plan to “strengthen” school councils and restructure Ontario parent council

DECEMBER 2000

Ministry of Education issues two regulations on school councils

On the issue of membership, the regulation stipulates that school board employees may not be parent members on school councils if they work at the same school that their child attends.

JUNE 2001

Ministry issues election guidelines

The Ministry of Education issues guidelines for school council elections slated for September 2001.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

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POLICY SECTION 8 ON SCHOOL COUNCILS

“School councils”

- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should be optional.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should be advisory.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should have no involvement in the evaluation, hiring, firing or promotion of any school personnel.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should not be obliged to raise funds for schools.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should avoid activities that would result in commercialization of schools.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that there should be no limitation on eligibility for holding school council positions based on a parent’s employment with the school board.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should advocate for quality and diversity of school programs.
- It is the policy of OSSTF that school councils should advocate for the interests of all students in the school.

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Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants
des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario
60 Mobile Drive, Toronto, Ontario M4A 2P3

TEL 416.751.8300
TEL 1.800.267.7867
FAX 416.751.7079
www.osstf.on.ca