

**EARL OF MARCH SECONDARY SCHOOL
SCHOOL COUNCIL
CONSTITUTION**

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of the Earl of March School Council is, through the active participation of parents or guardians, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.

1.2 The School Council shall communicate regularly with parents/guardians and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to advice being provided by the Council, and to report on the activities of the Council to the School community.

1.3 The School Council shall support the School commitment to provide a caring, challenging and safe environment which will encourage and motivate students to pursue excellence in all their endeavours.

1.4 The School Council shall act in an advisory capacity to the Principal and to the Board and/or senior staff in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Board and of the Education Act and Regulations.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The School Council is an advisory body. Subject to maintaining a School-wide focus and within the policy parameters established by the Board, the School Council may advise the School Principal and, where appropriate, the School Board, on any matter. Any advice provided to the School Principal or School Board will be based on the general views of the School community and the best interests of all students in the School. The School Council is accountable to the School community it represents.

2.2 Council members shall maintain a School-wide focus on all issues. Council meetings are not a forum for discussion about individual parents/guardians, students, staff, trustees or other Council members. Under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (1989), Councils cannot access information on individual students and staff. Individual members of the School community shall deal directly with the staff members and/or the Principal to resolve specific concerns.

2.3 In addition to its advisory responsibilities, the School Council shall:

- establish its goals, priorities, and procedures
- organize information sessions to enable members of the Council to develop their skills as Council members
- promote the best interests of the School community

- 2.4 There is an obligation on the part of the Board and the School Principal to:
- provide to the School Council existing non-confidential information necessary to carry out its responsibilities
 - subject to the Education Act and Regulations, the policies and procedures of the Board allow the School Council to publish information about its activities
 - permit the School Council to raise funds to be used for the benefit of the Council in carrying out its duties and/or to the School

2.5 School Council fundraising activities shall be governed by Ottawa-Carleton District School Board policies.

2.6 Members of the School Council shall be protected by the Board's liability insurance policy while they are acting within the scope of their duties on behalf of the Board, as sanctioned by the Principal.

2.7 The School Council may provide advice to the Principal, Board and/or senior staff. In cases where the advice is given in writing, if this advice is not accepted, the Principal, Board or senior staff, as the case may be, will, within a reasonable period of time, provide the School Council with the reasons in writing. If there will be a delay in providing a response, reasons for the delay will be provided in writing to the Council.

2.8 The School Council shall meet at a minimum of six times per School year and a maximum of ten times per year unless extenuating circumstances dictate more frequent meetings. All School Council meetings shall be open to the public.

2.9 The School Council may appoint a committee to address particular issues of interest as deemed necessary. All committees will be governed by a Terms of Reference approved by the School Council. The Terms should include, but are not limited to:

- the purpose of the committee
- any objectives
- the Chair, any other members
- the length of time the committee is in effect
- the committee's reporting responsibilities

The School Council may appoint any person to sit on a Committee, although at least one member of the Committee must be a parent member of the School Council. A summary of Committee meetings shall be presented at the regular School Council meeting. Unless the Terms of Reference state otherwise, any Committee cannot represent the School Council in any official delegation, advice giving or recommendation capacity, without first seeking formal approval from the School Council at a regular Council monthly meeting.

2.10 Proposed changes to the School Council Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Chair, Vice Chair and Principal for review and validation. The Chair shall then place the changes on the agenda for discussion.

3.0 COMPOSITION OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

3.1 The School Council shall be composed of, but not limited to:

- parents/guardians of students enrolled or registered in the School elected by the parents/guardians; this shall be further designated to include:
 - a Chair and Vice-Chair or two Co-Chairs
 - a Secretary
 - a Treasurer
 - a Web Content Manager
 - an OCASC Representative
 - Grade reps 9-12 (at least one per grade). A grade representative will have the responsibility to field inquires from parents in that grade, if required, and to represent the general opinions of parents/guardians of that grade.
- a community representative or representatives appointed by the School Council
- a student elected by the students
- the School Principal
- a teacher
- an administrative/support staff member
- where sufficient interest is expressed, the School Council may choose to elect up to 10 Members-at-Large

3.2 The minimum Council size is 11 members. At a minimum, the School Council will have 6 parent/guardians and five staff/other members, including a student. The parents/guardians must hold the majority of seats by at least one.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION OF PARENT MEMBERS

4.1 A person is qualified to be a parent member of the School Council if he or she is a parent/guardian of a pupil who is enrolled in the School.

4.2 A person, despite being parent/guardian of a pupil who is enrolled in the School, is ineligible to be a parent member of the School Council if:

- he or she is employed at the School; or
- he or she is not employed at the School but is employed elsewhere by the Board that established the Council, unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment.

4.3 A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members of the School Council if he or she is a parent/guardian of a pupil who is enrolled in the School.

5. COUNCIL ELECTIONS

5.1 An election of parent members of the School Council shall be held during the first 30 days of each School year, on a date that is fixed by the Chair or co-Chairs of the School Council after consulting with the Principal of the School.

5.2 Should the School Council prefer, two School Council co-chairs may assume office in lieu of a Chair and Vice Chair. This majority decision shall be made prior to the Council elections each year.

5.3 The Principal of the School shall, at least 14 days before the date of the election of the parent members, on behalf of the School Council, give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the School.

5.4 The election of parent members shall be by secret ballot. The Principal, assisted by the teaching and administrative staff representatives, will be responsible for the distribution and counting of ballots.

5.5 Persons seeking School Council office will be given the opportunity to discuss their views on the position they are seeking prior to the vote-taking place for a period of no more than five minutes. Voters will be afforded the opportunity to question those seeking office prior to the election.

5.6 When only one person seeks an office, an acclamation will be declared.

5.7 In the case of a tie vote, the tied candidates will draw lots to determine the election.

6. VACANCIES

6.1 A vacancy in the membership of the School Council shall be filled by election.

6.2 In the case that no person seeks to fill a vacancy, the School Chair may assign an eligible parent member to fill a vacant parent member position and the Principal may assign a staff member to fill a vacant staff position.

7. TERM OF OFFICE

7.1 A term of office shall not exceed one year.

7.2 A member of a School Council may be re-elected or re-appointed.

8. COUNCIL POSITIONS AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Chair

The Council Chair is responsible for:

- calling School Council meetings
- preparing the agenda for School Council meetings in consultation with the Principal
- chairing the School Council meetings
- ensuring that the minutes of School Council meetings are recorded and maintained
- the minutes should include, or have attached to them, any advice provided in writing to the Principal, the Board, and/or senior staff by the Council, and the written responses in reply
- ensuring that accurate records including financial are kept and an annual School Council budget and a year-end report are prepared and presented to the Council
- ensuring that a current Principal profile is on file with the Board by 31 October each year
- participating in information and training programs
- communicating with the School Principal
- report back to the Council on discussions held, as appropriate
- ensuring that there is a line of communications available with the School community
- consulting with senior Board staff and trustees as required
- report back to the Council on any discussions held
- preparing the annual report of the School Council to the Director of Education
- prior to submitting the report the chair shall table the report to the School Council for review and comment

8.2 Vice Chair

The Vice Chair is responsible for:

- assisting the Chair in the performance of their duties
- assume the responsibilities of the Chair during the Chair's absence
- preparing, for the approval of the School Council, any amendments to the School Council Constitution

8.3 Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for:

- recording and maintaining the minutes of School Council meetings
- preparing any communications for the School community

8.4 Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for:

- maintaining the financial records and accounts of the School Council
- preparing the financial statement for input into the annual report of the School Council

8.5 Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- facilitating the establishment of the School Council and assist in its operation
- supporting and promoting the Council's activities
- seeking input from the Council in areas for which it has been assigned advisory responsibility
- acting as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies, and collective agreements
- obtaining and providing information, including the budgets for the School and for School-generated funds, required by the Council to enable it to provide informed advice
- communicate with the Chair of the Council, as required
- ensuring that copies of the minutes of the Council's meetings are kept at the School
- assisting the Council in communicating with the School community
- encouraging the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the School community, in the life of the School and the activities of the School's Council

8.6 Teaching Staff Representative

The Teaching Staff representative is responsible for:

- ensuring a two way dialogue exists between the School Council and teaching staff
- raising any issues that the teaching staff may have to the School Council on any area that the School Council has an advisory capacity

8.7 Administrative Staff Representative

The Administrative Staff representative is responsible for:

- ensuring a two way dialogue exists between the School Council and administrative staff
- raising any issues that the administrative staff may have to the School Council on any area that the School Council has an advisory capacity

8.8 Student Representative

The Student Representative is responsible for:

- ensuring a two way dialogue exists between the School Council and the students
- raising any issues that the students may have to the School Council on any area that the School Council has an advisory capacity
- reporting to the School Council on any student activities

9.0 MAKING DECISIONS

9.1 Consensus

Consensus gives all Council members an effective voice in decisions; builds on differing perspectives and values; allows for flexibility in arriving at solutions; can result in better-informed, more creative, balanced, and enduring decisions; ensures that final decisions have the support of everyone, thus promoting a sense of commitment to and ownership of the decisions; creates a sense of common purpose; allows all Council members to maintain the integrity of their personal values while agreeing to a new solution.

Decisions by consensus that are null and void:

Any decisions that contradict provincial laws and regulations, local policy, or School Council bylaws are out of order and invalid.

Once a decision is reached by consensus, the Council may choose to formalize it through a motion.

9.2 Voting

In the event of the Council requiring a formal vote, Robert's Rules of Order shall apply.

10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

10.1 Each School Council member shall avoid situations that could result in an inconsistency between the overall goals and vision of the School Council and a personal or vested interest, that arise in connection with his or her duties as a School Council member.

10.2 Should an issue or agenda item arise during a Council meeting where a member is in a conflict of interest situation, he or she shall declare conflict of interest immediately and decline from the discussion and resolution.

11. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Every School Council member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concern or opinion about the issue at dispute and how the dispute has affected him or her
- Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times
- Speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption

- The Chair's responsibility is to clarify the statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised, and to set out the joint interests of all members before proceeding further
- If no common ground can be identified, the Chair will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further
- If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the Chair shall request the intervention of a superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution to the conflict
- Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement.

12. QUORUM

Quorum for School Council meetings shall be a minimum of 6 members the majority of whom must be parent/guardian members, and must include either the Chair or Vice-Chair and at least one Staff member.

13. E-MAIL VOTING

In the event a School Council meeting does not have quorum and there is urgent business outstanding from the agenda, the Chair can conduct a Council vote by E-mail. The E-mail call for a vote must explain the issue in detail, provide a reasonable deadline for questions and all questions raised must be satisfied before voting commences. Quorum is still required for the E-mail vote. Any issue that can reasonably be deferred to the next Council meeting shall be.