

Effective School Councils

Consultation with Parents by School Councils

One of a school council's main purposes is to share information with parents and the community and to seek their ideas and views about matters under consideration by the council. When and how this happens depends on the issues before the council. The impact of issues before council will vary – from having no direct or indirect impact on the students in the school to affecting all students in the school. The issue before the council will determine when it is appropriate to consult with parents and the community. Some issues may only require that information be provided to the school community. Other issues may require obtaining a formal position from the school community.

Any one or a combination of the following suggestions might be suitable methods of consultation and response:

- Hold a town-hall-style meeting to discuss issues and present information.
- Ask for input by distributing a survey, or send home a newsletter with a tear-off response form to be returned to the school. Hold focus group meetings at various times to ensure that all parents also have the opportunity to participate.
- Post information and requests for feedback on the school website.

School Council Membership

Ideally, the membership of the school council will reflect the diversity of its school community. Parents and guardians must form the majority of members on the council. Ontario Regulation 612/00 establishes that a school council will consist of the following members:

- ✓ a majority of parents,
- ✓ the principal or vice-principal of the school

- ✓ one teacher employed in the school, other than the principal or vice-principal
- ✓ one non-teaching employee of the school one student, in the case of secondary schools (optional for elementary schools)
- ✓ one or more community representatives appointed by the elected council
- ✓ one person appointed by an association that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations

All council members are encouraged to be familiar with their council's expectations of members and be prepared to make a commitment to conduct the council's business in a professional manner.

Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members

Accepting the role of school council member carries with it certain responsibilities. Each school council may define the roles and responsibilities of its members in its operating bylaws. These operating bylaws may include the expectation that members attend council meetings regularly.