



Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board

Section: **Schools**

Policy: **Catholic School Councils**

SC:01

POLICY

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board believes that parents are the primary educators of their children and that Catholic schools extend and complement the educational process begun and continued by parents. The purpose of the Catholic School Councils is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the Catholic Education system to parents. As well, Councils shall reinforce the idea of the school as one of the institutions which convey and express the life of the Church and Gospel values. A Catholic School Council's primary means of achieving its purpose is by making recommendations in accordance with Regulation 612/00 (School Councils) to the principal of the school and the board that established the council.

PROCEDURES

1. Membership and Term of Office

It is expected that the membership of the council shall reflect the diversity of the Catholic school community. All members of the Catholic School Council shall demonstrate a firm commitment to Catholic education and support, in action and words, the Philosophy and Goals of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. A majority of the members of the School Council as well as the Chair shall have Catholic School Trustee Qualifications.

**** Catholic School Trustee Qualifications:**

1. is a Canadian citizen
 2. is Roman Catholic
 3. is at least 18 years old,
 - is a separate school board supporter and qualifies as a separate school elector for the english-language district school board.
- a. Members of the Catholic School Council shall include the school principal and representation from:
- **parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school** - The number of which is expressed in the council's by-laws. Parent members shall constitute a majority of the members of the school council. These members are elected by parents/guardians of students who are enrolled in the school.
 - **the community** - one member appointed by the School Council; or, two or more appointed by the School Council if it is specified in the council's by-laws.
 - **elementary students** - one pupil selected at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the school council.

- **secondary students** - one pupil appointed by the Student Council; or, if there is no Student Council, one pupil elected by the students who are enrolled in the school at the time of the election.
 - **one teacher** who is employed at the school other than the principal or vice-principal. This member is elected by the teachers within the school.
 - **one non-teaching staff** - a member of the school who is elected by the non-teaching staff of the school.
 - **one person** appointed by the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education if the Association exists in the school.
 - **one member from the parish**
- b. Membership in the council shall be determined in the following ways:
- The school principal shall be a designated member.
 - Parents shall be elected by the parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school. A person is qualified to be a parent member of a school council if he/she is a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school.
 - Representation from the community shall be appointed by the Catholic School Council.
 - Secondary student representation shall be elected by the student population, if there is no Student Council. If there is a Student Council, the Student Council shall appoint the student representative.
 - Elementary student representation shall be selected at the discretion of the principal in consultation with the school council.
 - Teacher representation shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
 - Non-teacher representation shall be elected by members of the non-teaching staff.
 - Parish representation shall be selected by the local school parish(es).
- c. An election of parent members of a school council shall be held during the first thirty (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. At the completion of elections, every effort should be made to have all positions filled. Should position(s) remain vacant, the council shall have the responsibility to attempt to fill such vacancy (i.e. from within the appropriate groups). A vacancy shall be filled by election or appointment in accordance with the by-laws of the council. A vacancy in the membership of a school council does not prevent the council from exercising its authority.
- d. The term of office for elected and appointed positions shall not exceed one (1) year. Elected and appointed members may seek additional terms, unless otherwise provided by the by-laws of the council.

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2. Operations

- a. All Catholic School Council members shall be considered equal partners, with equal voting rights. The principal of the school is not entitled to vote in votes taken by the school council or by a committee of the school council.
- b. The council shall operate in a manner that uses consensus and compromise as the preferred method for developing recommendations and plans.
- c. The chair(s) of the council shall be a member who is also a parent or guardian of students enrolled in the school and shall be elected by the council. A person who is employed by the Board that established the council cannot be the chair or co-chair of the council. Further, a Trustee cannot be a member of a school council established by the Board.
- d. The members of council shall be established annually within the first thirty (30) days of the school year, and a directory of current members submitted to the appropriate supervisory officer.
- e. The Catholic School Council shall establish a meeting schedule of at least four (4) meetings per school year and publicize these dates. General members of the school community shall be invited to attend the meetings of the council and to voice their opinions and concerns on all issues appearing on the agenda. All meetings of a school council shall be open to the public and the school council is entitled to hold its meetings at the school. A meeting of a school council cannot be held unless a majority of the current council members are present at the meeting and a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.
- f. A school council shall keep minutes of all its meetings and shall keep records of all of its financial transactions. The minutes shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person. Minutes and records that are more than four (4) years old need not be made available. A school council shall not be incorporated.
- g. There shall be no honorarium paid to members of the Catholic School Council.

3. Constitution and By-Laws

Any provisions of a School Council's constitution or by-laws which are contrary to or inconsistent with the policies of the Board shall be deemed invalid and of no effect, and the Board's policy shall apply.

1. School council may make by-laws governing the conduct of its affairs.
2. Every school council shall make the following by-laws:
 - i A by-law that governs election procedures and the filling of vacancies in the membership of the school council.
 - ii A by-law that establishes rules respecting participation in school council proceedings in cases of conflict of interest.
 - iii A by-law that, in accordance with any applicable policies established by the board that established the council, establishes a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.
3. Individual school councils are encouraged to elect/appoint a school council representative to the elementary or secondary umbrella school council committee.

4. Internal School Council Disputes

- a. An internal school council dispute shall be defined as
 - i any issue on which the voting members of the council are unable to achieve consensus for the purpose of making a recommendation to the principal of the school or the board.
 - ii a disagreement as to the powers of the council or the proper procedures to be followed with respect to any matter.
 - iii a disagreement among the members of the council as to the interpretation or application of the council's by-laws, board policies, the Regulation governing school councils, or the status of any member of the council at a given time.
 - iv any issue on which the voting members of the council are unable to achieve consensus with respect to the manner in which funds are to be raised and the purpose(s) for which they are to be used.
- b. The mechanism for resolving an internal school council dispute shall be as follows:



STEP ONE

- i the issue and a concise summary of the disagreement shall be put in written form by the Principal and School Council Chair and submitted to the Superintendent in charge of the school.

- ii the Chairperson of the school council, a parent of the school council representing the opposing view, the principal and the Superintendent shall meet to discuss the issue. If consensus is reached on the appropriate resolution of the dispute, the Chairperson of the council shall report to the School Council.

STEP TWO

- i if no consensus is reached at Step One, the issue and a concise summary of the disagreement shall be put in written form by the Superintendent and submitted to the Director.

- ii the same four individuals as in Step One shall meet with the Director of Education or his/her designate, the local Trustee and the Board Chaplain to discuss the issue. If a consensus is reached on the appropriate resolution of the dispute, the Chairperson of the Council shall report to the School Council.

STEP THREE

- i if no consensus is reached at Step Two, the issue and a concise summary of the disagreement shall be put in written form by the Director of Education or his/her designate to the Chairperson of the School Board.

- ii the same four individuals as in Step One shall meet with the Trustees to discuss the issue. If a consensus is reached on the appropriate resolution of the dispute, the Chairperson shall report to the School Council. If a consensus is not reached, the Trustees have the right to make a final decision in the matter.

5. Board/Community Communication Protocol

- a. The Principal shall be the spokesperson for school related issues.

- b. The Catholic School Council Chairperson shall be the spokesperson for matters outlined in School Council legislation and/or regulations.

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- c. At all times, the consultation process shall be facilitated through a consensus-building partnership, at the school level by the Principal and the Catholic School Council Chairperson. The consultative process must reflect strategies that encompass the whole school community (surveys, special meetings, etc).
 - d. The Catholic School Council Chairperson, in consultation with the Principal, shall facilitate the operation of the Catholic School Council.
 - e. Catholic School Council recommendations/advice shall be referred by the Chairperson to the Principal or to the Board for further action. Referrals to the Board should be done in writing and delivered to the Secretary of the Board.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of the Catholic School Council

- a. The Catholic School Council is an **advisory body**. It shall provide advice to the school principal and, where appropriate, the Board on any matter.
- b. Catholic School Council members shall examine all issues from the school standpoint. If members consider themselves in conflict of interest they should excuse themselves from the issue. When meeting, **members shall not be allowed** to discuss specific parents, students, school/board trustees, personnel or other council members. Members shall be aware of and respect the protections regarding certain matters set out in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).
- c. The Catholic School Council shall communicate regularly with parents and other members of the Catholic community to seek their views and preferences in matters being addressed by the council, and to report on the activities of the council to the Catholic school community.
- d. The council shall make every effort to ensure that the views of students, parents, teachers and staff are understood by the council so that it can benefit from the ideas and expertise of community members.
- e. The council shall promote the best interest of the entire school community.
- f. The advice of Council shall be communicated only through the Chairperson or his/her designate. The opinion of individual members cannot constitute the position or advice of the Council and individual members shall have no standing in the Internal School Council Disputes mechanism. (Section 4) .

- g. Every school council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of the school and to the Board that established the council. If the school council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.

7.Roles and Responsibilities of Catholic School Council Members

- a. The **chairperson**, elected by the Catholic School Council members, shall:
- call Catholic School Council meetings
 - prepare, in cooperation with the principal, the agenda for Catholic School Council meetings
 - chair Catholic School Council meetings
 - ensure that the minutes of the Catholic School Council meeting are recorded and maintained
 - participate in information and training programs
 - communicate with the school principal
 - ensure that there is regular communication with the Catholic school community
 - consult with the Board senior staff and trustees, as required
 - ensure that an annual report on the council's activities is prepared, circulated to council members and submitted to the appropriate supervisory officer
- b. **Members of the Catholic School Council** shall:
- participate in council meetings
 - participate in information and training programs
 - act as a link between the Catholic School Council and the community
 - encourage the participation of parents from all groups and other people within the Catholic school community
 - help set the goals, priorities and procedures of the council
 - keep in the forefront the best interests of the entire Catholic school community
- c. The **principal** of the school shall:
- communicate and consult with the Chair of the School Council on a regular basis
 - upon request of the School Council, the Principal shall provide relevant information on matters pertaining to the school budget
 - provide for the prompt distribution to each member of the school council of any materials received by the principal from the Ministry that are identified by the Ministry as being for distribution to the members of school councils

post any materials distributed to members of the school council in the school in a location that is accessible to parents (see above)

- in each school year not later than thirty (30) days following the election of parent members of the school council, make the names of the members of the school council known to the parents of the pupils enrolled in the school, by publishing those names in a school newsletter or by such other means as is likely to bring the names to the attention of the parents
- attend every meeting of the school council, unless he or she is unable to do so by reason of illness or other cause beyond his or her control and appoint a designate to attend council meetings, if unable to attend
- act as a resource person to the school council and shall assist the council in obtaining information relevant to the functions of the council, including information relating to relevant legislation, regulations and policies
- consider each recommendation made to the principal by the school council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation, in a timely manner
- In addition to his or her other obligations to solicit the views of the school council under the Act and the regulations, the principal of a school shall solicit the views of the school council with respect to the following matters:
 - a. The establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
 - i. A local code of conduct established under subsection 303 (1) or (2) of the Act governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
 - ii. School policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board under subsection 302 (5) of the Act respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
 - b. The development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
 - i. implementation plans for a local code of conduct established under subsection 303 (1) or (2) of the Act governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
 - ii. implementation plans for school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board under subsection 302 (5) of the Act respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.

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- c. School action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public.
- assist with the electoral/appointment process
- seek input from the council in areas for which it has been assigned advisory responsibility
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies, and collective agreements
- obtain and provide information required by the council to enable it to make informed decisions
- communicate with the chair of the council
- ensure that copies of the minutes of the council's meetings are accessible at the school and that copies are sent to the appropriate supervisory officer and local trustees
- assist the council in communicating with the school community
- encourage the participation of parents from all groups and other people within the school community
- the principal shall, on behalf of the school council, give a copy of the School Council Annual Report to every parent of a pupil who, on the date that the copy is given, is enrolled in the school.

8. Roles and Responsibilities of the Board

In addition to its other obligations to solicit the views of school councils under the Act, every board shall solicit the views of the school councils established by the board with respect to the following matters:

- a. The establishment or amendment of board policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
 - i. policies and guidelines established under subsection 302 (1) of the Act with respect to the conduct of persons in schools within the board's jurisdiction,
 - ii. policies and guidelines established under subsection 302 (5) of the Act respecting
 - appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction,
 - iii. policies and guidelines respecting the allocation of funding by the board to school councils,
 - iv. policies and guidelines respecting the fund-raising activities of school councils,
 - v. policies and guidelines respecting conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes.

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The Board that established a school council shall consider each recommendation made to the board by the council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation, in a timely manner.

Further, the Board shall:

- a. seek advice from a recognized spokesperson from local Catholic School Councils.
- b. solicit the views of School Councils on selection criteria and placement of principals and vice-principals.
- c. solicit the views of School Councils on Board action plans for improvement based on EQAO reports on results of tests.
- d. circulate pertinent information to Catholic School Councils as it becomes available that shall enable them to fulfil their role as an advisory body.
- e. provide the council with all changes and amendments to legislation regarding Catholic School Councils sent from the Ministry of Education and Training.
- f. work in partnership with the Catholic School Councils to provide training and information for council members.
- g. develop a Handbook for Catholic School Councils and ensure that it is available in all our schools.
- h. allocate funding to school councils for school council expenses based on funding provided by the Ministry of Education specifically identified for the operation of school councils.
- i. allocate funding to school councils for expense reimbursement for members based on the funding provided by the Ministry of Education specifically identified for legitimate expenses of school council members.

Amended by the Board: June 26, 2001
Approved by Board: June 23, 1998
Related Policy:
Related Board Committee:
Policy Review Date: 2005

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APPENDIX

Regulation 612/00 (Summary)

This regulation provides clarification for all education partners of the purpose and roles for school councils and helps to ensure school councils' effective operations.

It also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of school councils for all members of the education community including principals and boards. This will enable school councils to carry out their responsibilities effectively. In addition school boards are now required to consult with school councils on matters related to the purpose of school councils, consider their recommendations, and report back to them on how their advice has been taken into account.

School councils are also able to make recommendations on any matter to the principal or to the board.

The regulation directs school boards, as part of their responsibilities, to consult with school councils on a number of specified matters, including the development and implementation of policies regarding their board's:

- Code of Conduct of persons in schools (Safe Schools Act)
- pupil dress code
- allocation of funding for school councils
- fund-raising activities of school councils
- conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes
- reimbursement by Board of expenses for school councils members

Boards shall consult with School Councils on:

- action plans for improvement based on EQAO reports on results of tests
- selection criteria and placement of principals and vice-principals

The regulation also indicates that boards not be limited to this list in consulting with school councils.

The regulation clarifies eligibility for membership on a school council:

- board employees are eligible to be elected as parent representatives at their child's school unless they also are employed at that school.
- board employees will not be eligible to serve as parent/community members in the school where they work;
- board employees will be required to notify electors prior to being elected as parent members, or appointed as community representatives in the school where their children attend school;

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- board employees will not be eligible to serve as chair or co-chair of a school council; and
- trustees will not be eligible to serve on a school council in the board where they are a trustee.

All school councils elections will now be held within the first 30 days of the school year.

The regulation gives the Ministry the authority to collect names and mailing addresses of school council members, for the purpose of consulting and communicating directly with school council members in addition to providing the authority to enable the Ministry to disclose this information to the Ontario Parent Council for the same purpose.

Under the regulation, the Ministry is required to report to school councils at least once a year, to consult and communicate with school councils, and to provide them with information about their roles and responsibilities.

School councils must now establish bylaws that address:

- election procedures, and the filling of vacancies in membership;
- conflict of interest rules for members on school councils; and
- internal conflict resolution processes, in accordance with board policies.

School Councils shall not be incorporated.

Regulation 613/00 (Summary)

The duties of principals with respect to school councils are set out in the amendments to Regulation 298 (O. Regulation 613). The changes place a legal obligation on principals to post materials for parents that have been forwarded from the Ministry for distribution to the school council, and requires the principal to attend meetings of school councils.

Principals are also now required to consult with school councils on specified matters related to the purpose of school councils, including the development and implementation of school policies on the school's:

- code of conduct and the board's policies regarding appropriate dress for students; and
- school action plans for improvement based on the EQAO reports on the result of tests.

Principals are required to consider the recommendations made by school councils and advise the council of the actions taken in response.