



SCHOOL COUNCIL HANDBOOK©

***QUICK START GUIDE
VERSION 2***

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**YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
SCHOOL COUNCIL HANDBOOK©
QUICK START GUIDE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD..... 1

ABOUT THE BOARD 2

COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOARD 14

CONFLICT RESOLUTION 15

RUNNING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCILS..... 16

APPENDICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 33

SAMPLE CONSTITUTIONS..... 35

TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT 46

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 48

Message from the...

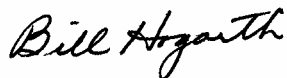
Director of Education

School councils are an integral part of our schools' makeup. Each member of a school council offers a diverse perspective that allows for dialogue as to the common needs of each school. I encourage you to build strong teams with clear goals, to listen to and respect each other, and to keep your focus on the students.

I invite each of you to join with us in our mission as "we unite in our purpose to inspire and prepare learners for life in our changing world community."

Together, we can achieve our goal of ensuring student success.

Sincerely,



Bill Hogarth
Director of Education

Board Chair

The Board and its staff members believe strongly that student learning is enhanced when parents and community members go the extra mile to get involved in school activities.

School councils are the bridges that help to build partnerships among families, schools and community members.

Success will depend upon the degree to which they reflect the diversity of interests and priorities of their communities.

The Board welcomes your school council to our dynamic educational team.

Sincerely,



Bill Crothers
Board Chair

Superintendent of Schools

The following pages were developed to provide you with background information on the York Region District School Board, as well as information regarding Board Policies and Procedures relating to school council operations and key resources to assist you and other school council members.

This handbook is simply one tool to assist you in your quest to work collaboratively towards ensuring student success.

Throughout the year, additional support in the form of training, online conferences and regular communication will be provided.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact your superintendent of schools or me.

Sincerely,



Ken Thurston
Superintendent of Schools

Access this handbook at:

www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca

The website will also offer new information periodically for use by school councils.

ABOUT THE BOARD

1.1 THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The York Region District School Board is governed by the *Education Act* and is comprised of 12 trustees, who are publicly elected to serve for a three-year term. The Board is responsible for approving policies and by-laws (available on the Board's website) which govern the entire operation of the educational system, including student, program, administration, staff, and property matters. As an employer, the Board negotiates collective agreements with all employee groups. It approves recommendations with respect to the appointment of senior staff and supervisory officers and is responsible for the hiring and terms of employment for the director of education.

In addition, each year the Board must approve a budget within the parameters of the Ministry of Education's funding formula that is fiscally responsible and meets all student needs and educational goals of the organization. The Board is also active in many provincial educational associations and liaises often with the Ministry of Education and other government ministries, agencies, boards and commissions.

1.2 ROLE OF THE TRUSTEES

Trustees are publicly elected officials accountable to their constituents and the community as a whole for the decisions made collectively as a Board. Trustees communicate with the public via formal and informal meetings with parent groups and concerned citizens, through the distribution of materials and through Board meetings that are open to the public.

Trustees are available and accessible to address concerns from the community with respect to Board policies and education matters. They act as ambassadors for the system, officiating and speaking at school openings and events. Trustees also function as ombudspersons for students and community members, advocating a wide range of issues regarding public education.

1.3 BOARD ADMINISTRATION (also referred to as “the Board”)

1.3.1 THE DIRECTOR

The director of education is the chief executive officer of the Board and is responsible to the Board of Trustees for the efficient management and coordination of all matters related to the instructional and business aspects of the Board's operation. The director provides advice to the Board of Trustees and its committees regarding policy formation, educational issues and other administrative matters. He also appraises the Board of staff changes and submits all reports required by the Board and its committees.

1.3.2 THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR – Business Services

The associate director responsible for business services in the York Region District School Board reports to the director.

1.3.3 COORDINATING SUPERINTENDENTS OF EDUCATION

There are three coordinating superintendents of education who oversee such areas as staffing, Board and school plans for continuous improvement, staff development and the appointments and transfers of principals and vice-principals.

1.3.4 SUPERINTENDENTS OF EDUCATION

Currently, there are eight superintendents responsible for public elementary schools in York Region (two in each of the four geographic areas of the Board – Central, North, West, East). There are also three superintendents who have the responsibility for public secondary schools in York Region. The superintendents ensure the link between the Board and the schools and community with each taking on a responsibility for designated schools.

Superintendents are also assigned for the following areas: corporate planning, curriculum and instructional services, employee services, and plant services.

1.3.5 COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTRES (CECs)

There are five CECs- in the Board (North, Central, West, East and Secondary). Each CEC provides support for various administrative functions for the schools designated to the area. Its functions are performed in conjunction with various divisions and departments of the Education Centre Aurora and Newmarket. They include: staffing of schools (teachers, teaching assistants and secretarial), supervision of staff, staff development, enrolment statistics, parent concerns, classroom programs, boundaries, budget, non-resident student registrations, occasional teacher dispatching, special education (student placements, classes and programs), psychological testing, attendance counseling, and many other student support services.

Each Community Education Centre is represented by superintendents of schools (see above), a business administrator, and special education administrators, as well as secretarial support staff.

CECs

North	Central	West	East
East Gwillimbury Georgina Newmarket	Aurora King North Richmond Hill	Kleinberg Maple South Richmond Hill Thornhill Vaughan Woodbridge	Markham Whitchurch/Stouffville
Secondary – All Board areas			

1.3.6 THE PRINCIPAL

The principal of a school, subject to the authority of the appropriate supervisory officer, is in charge of, a) the instructional and discipline of pupils in the school; and b) the organization and management of the school.” – Ontario Regulation 298.

Along with these two responsibilities, the principal’s responsibilities also encompass a broad spectrum of duties and tasks, many of which are often unknown to the public at large. The principal is accountable to the students, parents, staff and senior administration for every aspect of the school organization. The function of the principal is governed and bound by the limits of Board policy, the Ministry of Education’s legislation, regulations and directives, and the various collective agreements which apply to the teaching and support staff within the school.

Duties and tasks of the principal:

This following is not intended to be either comprehensive or all-inclusive but indicates the scope and variety of a principal’s responsibilities. One or more vice-principals may also be assigned to the school to help the principal with his or her work. Each principal is responsible for:

- organizing and managing his/her individual school, including any budget assigned to the school by the Board;
- student admission and placement;
- maintaining student records;
- holding examinations and ensuring report cards are sent to parents;
- developing a school safe arrival program with the help of the school council, parents, and the community (elementary schools);
- ensuring proper student supervision for all activities in and out of the school;
- ensuring school discipline. This can include applying suspensions to students and recommend expulsions where necessary;
- instruction - assigning teachers to classes and assisting and supervising them;
- preparing timetables for staff and students;
- making recommendations to the Board on the appointment, promotion, demotion and dismissal of teachers;
- selecting textbooks and other learning materials from the approved Ministry of Education list, with the help of teachers;
- ensuring ongoing maintenance of the school buildings;
- preparing plans for fires and emergencies and conduct fire drills;
- refusing to admit persons believed to be infected with or exposed to communicable diseases requiring an order under section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act;
- assigning duties to vice-principals and teachers in charge of organizational units e.g. Lead teachers in elementary schools and department heads in secondary schools;
- providing prompt distribution of ministry materials to school council;
- attending every meeting of the school council;

- consulting with the school council regarding:
 - School code of conduct,
 - Appropriate dress for pupils,
 - School action plans for improvement;
- considering recommendations and giving feedback to the school council.

1.4 SCHOOL AND BOARD PLANNING

1.4.1 BOARD PLAN

Our Board plan aligns with our school plans for continuous improvement and the Board’s mission, vision and values. So many researchers have told us that enduring change occurs at the school level. The school is the strategic unit for change. It is the collective passion and commitment of dedicated staff – teachers, caretakers, secretaries, and our parents and community partners – our volunteers, that breathes life into a school plan.

The job of the system – the Board administrators - is to support schools. System staff and resources are directed so that the school plan becomes a reality. At the same time, system services must focus on linking the school planning we are already doing, to the government’s reporting requirements.

Within the context of the Board’s mission, vision and values, a system plan for continuous improvement is developed. The plan enables the Board to respond to a variety of reporting requirements. This plan serves as a framework for system activity and resource allocation, and provides the basis for measuring improvement.

The plan is focused on three broad priority areas:

1. Quality Schools – focusing on curriculum and student achievement;
2. Building Family and Community Capacity – focusing on relationship of parents and community involvement; and
3. Quality Workplaces – focusing on continuous improvement planning and staff growth.

For each priority area in the Board Plan for Continuous Improvement, specific goals, indicators and measures are identified. The Board Plan for Continuous Improvement is presented to the Board of Trustees yearly.

1.4.2 SCHOOL PLANS

School plans are developed in the context of Board-wide priorities. Each school is required to develop a school plan for continuous improvement that supports the Board plan and reflects the individual school’s priorities and needs. The school priority areas are:

1. Curriculum
2. Parental Involvement
3. Effective schools

School councils have a significant role to play in working with the principal and staff to set the school's priorities as well as developing and implementing plans to achieve the goals that are set.

School plans focus on the Board's three broad priority areas. As well, the school plans for continuous improvement take into consideration the requirements of the school profile and then organize student/staff/school priorities by detailing the following:

- strategies and activities
- responsibilities
- timelines
- indicators of success
- resources
- evaluation

1.4.3 SCHOOL PROFILES

School profiles offer a snapshot of characteristics that are unique to each individual school.

School profiles describe:

- the school community
- the school program
- facility and budget requirements
- required profile/vision of school principal
- community involvement

School Councils are a valuable resource to principals in the development of school profiles given the unique knowledge of the local community, its needs and resources.

1.5 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE BOARD

The York Region District School Board is governed by provincial statutes and regulations, its own operational by-laws and policies and its mission, vision and values. The policies serve as a guide for the Board's administration and staff to develop and implement procedures.

The Board is committed to equity. Its primary objective is to provide equity in its educational opportunities across York Region. As such, the Board will regularly review its policies to ensure appropriate attention is given to such dimensions of the operation as the learning environment inside and outside the classroom, the development of each student to his or her potential, discipline in schools, and the professional development of trustees and staff.

The Board, as a responsible corporate entity, fully realizes that its policy statements are statements of intent and that the Board can only implement its intentions as its human and fiscal resources permit. Procedures are designed to assist personnel to implement policies and to carry out system activities efficiently.

1.5.1 THE ROLE SCHOOL COUNCILS PLAY

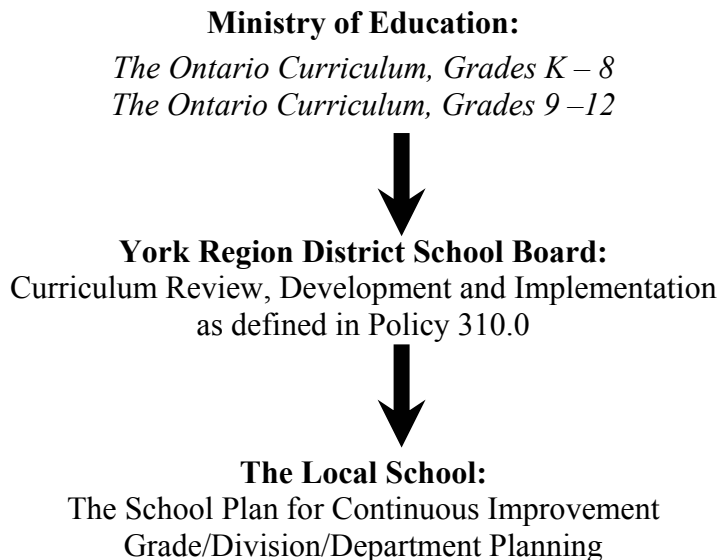
School Councils play an important role in the regular review of Board policies. The Board seeks their input on policies that are currently under development and review. This feedback is vital to ensuring that all partners in the education system are an integral part of establishing sound policies. The Board values the unique perspective school councils can provide to the policy review process.

1.5.2 WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

All Board policies and by-laws are available for viewing and downloading on the Board's website at www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca.

1.6 CURRICULUM

1.6.1 WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?



1.6.2 CURRICULUM: A YORK REGION PERSPECTIVE

Purposeful, dynamic, inviting. To prepare our graduates for the demands of the 21st century, the curriculum must meet the standards defined by these three words. The world of the future will undoubtedly be one that requires the ability to respond critically and creatively to new situations and challenges. It will also be a world in which citizens will be challenged to accept not only community, but also global responsibilities. A purposeful, dynamic and inviting curriculum experience will prepare our students to:

- problem solve effectively;
- use a variety of resources at their disposal, including new technologies; and
- appreciate and respect the diversities of our global population.

Since 1991, through our extensive work with Results-Based Learning, the Board has come to a fuller appreciation of the power of a focused approach to the development and delivery of curriculum. *The Ontario Curriculum* policy documents provide a framework for this purposeful approach to education, defining the expectations for learning for every subject, at every grade level from a provincial perspective.

Curriculum Expectations for York Region Schools: A Curriculum Framework is a foundation document that establishes the key principles and common expectations for planning, assessment, instruction, and reporting which support the implementation of *The Ontario Curriculum* in our schools. This document provides guidance to teachers and administrators as they continuously strive to achieve high quality programs for all York Region students.

1.6.3 FOUNDATIONS FOR RESULTS-BASED LEARNING

The Ontario Curriculum — both elementary and secondary — defines the expectations for learning for every subject and for every grade. What remains is to determine the planning, instructional, and assessment strategies which will ensure that every student is enabled to achieve the results which are intended to prepare him/her for the future.

1.6.3.1 THE PRINCIPLES OF RESULTS-BASED LEARNING

Results-based learning:

1. is a way of thinking and working that directly affects every aspect of the schooling process;
2. requires that schools maintain a clear focus for learning, have high expectations, know and use effective instructional, assessment and evaluation strategies; and
3. requires schools to deliberately design learning conditions so that all students have the time and support they need to learn effectively.

1.6.4 CURRICULUM REVIEW, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

A Focus on Continuous Improvement

As educators, we are preparing students for a world that is constantly changing. Thus, we are challenged to continuously address the need for change openly and honestly. Fine-tuning today's roles, structures, and methods, or working harder to make old answers work in a new environment will not be sufficient to meet the challenge. As we continue to learn and manage change, we revitalize the teaching that we offer our students.

Managing continuous change is an easier task when educational partners work together. Teachers, students, parents and community members together have the ingenuity and resources to design and deliver exciting learning and teaching experiences.

Key Premises that form the foundation for learning in the York Region District School Board:

1. All students can learn but not at the same time, in the same way or on the same day.
2. Ongoing feedback about progress toward clearly defined expectations encourages and motivates students to further success.
3. Teachers, collaboratively and individually, set the stage for student learning through school organization, selection of instructional strategies, resources, appropriate assessment/evaluation practices and parental/community involvement.

1.6.5 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ministry of Education Website: <http://www.gov.edu.on.ca>

This site contains all of the Ministry of Education program documents along with curriculum updates, news releases and links to other educational sites.

York Region District School Board Curriculum Website:

<http://www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/curricul/curricul.html>

This site contains information regarding key curriculum initiatives that are current focus in York Region schools.

If you have any questions regarding the school curriculum, your school principal is able to provide direction.

1.7 SPECIAL EDUCATION

Ontario's *Education Act* and related regulations require school boards to provide special education programs and services for children who need them. These programs and services are described in *the York Region District School Board Special Education Plan 2001*.

In accordance with the Education Act and Regulations:

- Each Ontario school-age pupil is entitled to access publicly supported education, regardless of the pupil's needs;
- Pupils who are identified as exceptional are entitled to special education programs and services suited to those needs;
- Parents or guardians of exceptional pupils are consulted with regard to the assessment, identification placement and program development for their children with special needs.

The York Region District School Board supports the intent of Regulation 181/98 that:

- ◆ wherever possible, the needs of exceptional students be met in a regular class with appropriate special education services, when such a placement meets the student's needs and is consistent with parental wishes;
- ◆ a continuum of service be available for students whose needs cannot be met within the regular classroom.

1.7.1 IDENTIFICATION PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

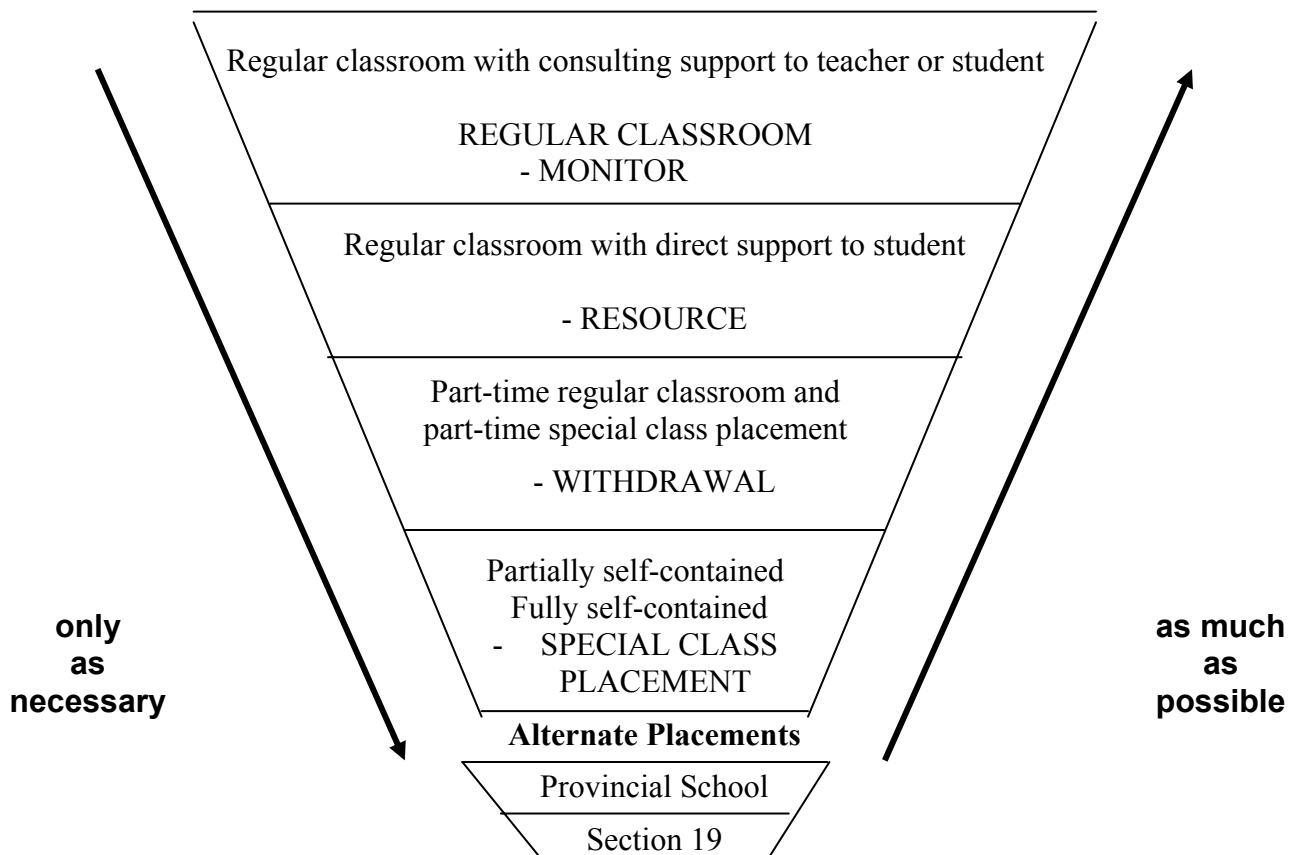
School boards are required to establish Identification Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs) in order to identify those students who need special education programs and services. IPRCs follow a formal process governed by provincial law; Regulation 181/98. A brochure entitled A Parents' Guide to IPRC is available to provide information regarding this process.

The IPRC:

- decides whether a child should be identified as “exceptional”;
- identifies the category and area of exceptionality;
- decides on an appropriate placement for the child who is identified as exceptional; and
- reviews the identification and placement at least once in each school year.

1.7.2 PLACEMENT OPTIONS

The York Region District School Board remains committed to the principle that all students are integrated into the regular classroom as much as possible. The following placements are available to meet the needs of exceptional students as identified by the IPRC.



Additional information regarding placement options is provided in the Special Education Plan, available in each school office or resource centre.

Once a student is identified as exceptional, through the IPRC process, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed.

1.7.3 INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

The IEP identifies required accommodations, and learning expectations which differ from those described in the grade appropriate Ontario Curriculum, and is developed in consultation with the child's parent(s).

The IEP includes:

- specific educational expectations;
- an outline of the special education program and services that will be received;
- a statement about the methods used to review progress; and
- a plan for transition to post-secondary school activities (e.g. work, further education, and community living) for students 14 and older.

Regional resource support services are also available to support teachers and students. Support staff are located both regionally and at Community Education Centres and can be accessed through the In-school Team process (described in Section E of the Special Education Plan 2001).

1.7.4 SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

Under Ontario's legislation, each school board is required to have a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). SEAC plays an important role in ensuring that exceptional students receive appropriate educational services. SEAC may make recommendations to the Board concerning the establishment and development of special education programs and services.

SEAC members also provide information, advice and assistance to parents and guardians whose children may require additional support. The names and contact numbers for each SEAC member are on the Board's website at www.yrdsb.edu.on.ca. SEAC meets the first Thursday of each month beginning at 7 p.m. at the Education Centre Aurora. Visit the Board's website for further details.

1.8 TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS IN ONTARIO

In order to teach Kindergarten to Grade 6, an undergraduate degree and a Bachelor of Education (BEd) or equivalent is needed. For Grades 7 to 12, teachers also need to be qualified as an expert in one subject. In addition, to teach high school, they must be qualified to teach two subjects.

After successful completion of the teacher training program, membership in the Ontario College of Teachers is the last step. Until graduates of teacher education programs and out of province/country applicants are members of the Ontario College of Teachers, they are not eligible to teach in a publicly funded elementary or secondary school in Ontario.

Prior to an offer of employment by the Board, successful candidates are required to provide documentation indicating that they hold Teaching Qualifications and are currently a registered member, in good standing, with the Ontario College of Teachers (as per Section 262 of the *Education Act*).

All certified teachers in the province pay an annual fee to retain membership in the Ontario College of Teachers.

1.8.1 THE ONTARIO TEACHERS' FEDERATION

Set up by the Teaching Profession Act of 1944 as the professional organization for teachers in the province, all teachers (as defined in the Teaching Profession Act) are required to belong to the Federation, as a condition of teaching in the publicly funded schools of Ontario. The Federation, through the application of its by-laws, assigns each teacher to a specific Affiliate. In the York Region District School Board, elementary school teachers belong to the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). Secondary school teachers belong to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF).

Each of these affiliates has a local branch with locally elected executives to protect the interests of the teachers working for the York Region District School Board. The local ETFO negotiates a collective agreement with the Board for all teachers (including occasional teachers) from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The local OSSTF affiliate negotiates with the Board for secondary school teachers.

Principals and vice-principals are not included in these bargaining units.

The teachers' collective agreements are legal contracts that establish such working conditions as:

- Salaries
- Benefits
- Sick leave
- Retirement gratuity
- Leave of absence
- Grieving procedures
- Staffing
- Lunch Break
- Preparation Time

The affiliates work with the Board to make sure the terms of the collective agreements are carefully observed by all. Teachers are also bound by Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession.

The teachers' federations provide a number of services for teachers, such as updates on current educational issues, a wide range of professional development opportunities, and professional counseling. Teachers pay an annual fee to finance their federations. In turn, the federations provide a strong network and a collective voice that speaks for them and education throughout Ontario.

1.9 CUPE 1196 and CUPE 1734

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) is Canada's largest union. Its members are workers in municipal, provincial, and federal government departments. CUPE Locals 1196 and 1734 are divisions of this union.

The members of CUPE 1196 include caretakers, landscapers, couriers, truck drivers, cabinet makers, electricians, mechanical (heating), general maintenance, welders, locksmiths, carpenters, plumbers, painters and masons.

The members of CUPE Local 1734 comprise a variety of positions including secretaries, education assistants and clerical staff.

Through the collective bargaining process, CUPE members strive to build a better future for us all. They work hand-in-hand with the York Region District School Board to provide safe, clean, comfortable learning environments.

As community partners, their members also support and participate in community projects and as members of a variety of community agencies. They provide sponsorship for youth athletic teams, assist in food drives, donate to local charitable endeavours and participate in special initiatives for worthwhile causes.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOARD

2.1 School Council Forums

School council forums (at least two per year, usually held in spring and fall) are held in each Community Education Centre during the school year to provide school council members with information on Ministry and Board initiatives, as well as providing an opportunity for dialogue among local trustees, council members and Board and school administrators. Information regarding the forums will be forwarded to school council chairs and the school principal by the area superintendent.

2.2 Newsletter – “Bridges” and the Board’s Website

The Board’s newsletter for school councils entitled “Bridges” is distributed three times a school year to provide school councils with helpful tips and information. The newsletter is produced by Board staff to ensure that school council members are kept informed of Board initiatives. The Board’s website also provides updated information including Board meetings, minutes, agendas and news releases.

2.3 Online Conference for School Councils

The online conference is a vehicle for sharing ideas, effective practices and relevant information amongst school council members. To find out how to gain access, contact the Board’s webmaster at ext. 2319.

2.4 Other methods of communicating

Open communication about areas of concern help to strengthen the partnership among members of the community, the schools and the Board. Policy and Procedure #262 will help you determine the best way of communicating your message. Principals, as agents of the Board within each school, are the primary contacts as sources of information.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Each school council must have a by-law regarding conflict resolution as per Ministry legislation and the Board's procedure. In general, if school councils are dealing with internal conflict and other difficult matters:

1. Be proactive. Positive interpersonal relationships are critical to an effective organization. Most issues can be resolved if they are brought forward and addressed early.
2. Gather as much information about the situation as possible, bring the matter to your principal for discussion/decision and next steps. Most situations can be resolved at this point through dialogue and co-operation among those involved. Principals or chairs may be very useful at this point by clarifying policy or legislation and offering facilitation skills.
3. If the school council cannot resolve a matter, the chair or designate of the council can bring the matter forward to the superintendent responsible for your school. The superintendent may assist you by acting as a facilitator in attempting to resolve the matter. You may wish to put your concerns in writing.
4. If after following the above steps, your school council still feels strongly that the situation requires further consideration, you may contact either the director's office or the Chair of the Board's office. The matter will be reviewed and may be directed to a staff member for action. The possibility of presenting your case to the Board of Trustees or to a Board or Standing Committee meeting may also be discussed.

Remember, you are welcome to speak with your local trustee at any time to share concerns or make suggestions. Depending on the circumstances, however, there is a possibility that you will be asked to follow the above steps in order to best meet your needs.

RUNNING EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCILS

4.1 ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

The role of the schools councils is to improve student learning and to develop a shared sense of accountability for the public education system among both parents and educators.

4.1.2 THE ROLE AS DEFINED BY THE YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

The background for the Board's policy on school councils provides a clear sense of the role and reads as follows:

The YRDSB, through its mission statement, believes that collaborative partnerships among the school, the family and the community are essential to improving student learning and increasing a shared sense of accountability for public education.

The Board believes that strong school community partnerships are built around a common vision, common goals and nurtured through regular communication, meaningful consultation and the extensive involvement of all members of the school community.

The Board believes that school councils play an important role in building school, family and community partnerships by providing input into relevant school level and Board decisions and by encouraging the meaningful involvement of all members of the school community in support of student learning.

School councils achieve these goals through a variety of strategies including:

- *ongoing dialogue with and advice to the principal*
- *participation in the development and support of the school improvement plan*
- *volunteering in various capacities*
- *promoting parent education and learning at home*
- *coordinating community resources.*

While the primary role of a school council is focused within the school community, the Board values advice from school councils on the development and review of policies and other matters of concern to councils.

The full policy can be viewed on the Board's website in the policy and procedures section, item # 262.

4.1.3 THE ROLE AS DEFINED BY THE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

In 1998, the Education Improvement Commission completed an extensive study of school councils after meeting with hundreds of educators, school council members, trustees and concerned members of the community. It recommended that the purpose of school councils be clarified to focus on improved student learning and the Commission recommended that school councils focus on the following three areas in order to achieve this purpose. These are in essence, three specific roles:

1. Fostering Parental and Community Involvement in Education
2. Participating in the School Improvement Planning Process
3. Influencing decisions made by principals, school boards and the Ministry of Education

The full report of the Education Improvement Commission, entitled *The Road Ahead III – A Report on the Role of School Councils* is available on line at: <http://eic.edu.gov.on.ca>. Look under “School Councils” and then “Report”.

4.2 GUIDE TO THE BOARD'S SCHOOL COUNCIL PROCEDURE 262

The following is intended to simplify and clarify the Board's school council procedure. Please refer to the complete document for detailed information.

SECTION #1: PURPOSE AND ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

According to Ministry of Education Reg. 612 and Board Policy 262, the purpose of school councils is to support improved student learning and an increased sense of shared accountability for public education.

As stated in Board Policy 262.0,

“the Board believes that school councils play an important role in building school, family and community partnerships by providing input into relevant Board and school level decisions and by encouraging the involvement of all members of the school community in support of student learning.”

- School councils are advisory bodies.
- They can make recommendations to the principal and/or the Board on ANY matter (with the exception of confidential personnel matters).

SECTION #2: COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL COUNCIL

- PARENTS (must form the majority of council members)
 - The number of parents should be defined in your constitution otherwise it will be six.
 - A parent member CANNOT be employed at the school with the exception of school (lay) assistants.
 - If a parent works for the Board but not at your school, they can be a parent member IF he/she informs the school community prior to the election.
(The above applies to community members as well).
- ONE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE (optional at Elementary Level)
 - Appointed by the student council, OR elected by the student body.
- ONE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE
 - You may appoint up to 4, if you make such a by-law in your constitution.
- THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
 - If he or she is unable to attend a meeting, he/she may send the vice-principal.
- ONE TEACHING STAFF REPRESENTATIVE
 - elected by the teachers of the school.
- ONE SUPPORT STAFF REPRESENTATIVE
 - elected by the support staff of the school.

SECTION #3: ELECTION OF SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

- ELECTION OF PARENT MEMBERS
 - **Parents may be acclaimed or elected;**
 - **Elections must be held during the first 30 calendar days of each school year;**
 - Public notice must be given 14 days before the election, specifying date, time and location;
 - Each parent of a student has one vote by secret ballot and may vote for up to as many parent candidates as there are parent positions on council.

- ELECTION OF OFFICERS
 - The council members elect the chair/co-chairs. (They must be parents and not employed with the Board);
 - The council members may elect other officers if it is stated in your constitution.

- VACANCIES
 - Do not prevent the school council from exercising its authority;
 - Can be filled by election or appointment in accordance with the by-laws of your council.

- TERM OF OFFICE
 - **One year only** but members may be re-elected unless otherwise restricted in your constitution.

SECTION #4: VOTING

Consensus is encouraged, but when you must vote:

- Each member of council is entitled to one vote, with the exception of the principal.
- Each committee member gets one vote, in votes taken by that committee, even if they are not a member of council.

SECTION #5: REMUNERATION

- A person cannot receive any remuneration for serving on school council.
- Reimbursement for expenses shall be in accordance with Board policies.

SECTION #6: INCORPORATION

- A school council shall not be incorporated.

SECTION #7: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

- The Board **MUST** ask councils for input on:

- a) policies and guidelines including, but not limited to: code of conduct, dress code, allocation of funds to councils, conflict resolution, fundraising, reimbursement of expenses;
 - b) the development of plans that relate to: student achievement or accountability;
 - c) Board action plans for improvement based on EQAO results;
 - d) the *process and criteria* for the selection of principals and vice principals.
- The Board must inform councils of the action taken in response to their recommendations.
 - The Board will:
 - hold school council forums in each CEC at least twice a year;
 - offer relevant professional development for school councils;
 - appoint school council representatives to ad hoc advisory committees;
 - provide legal protection to school councils and members of councils;
 - rule on internal disputes of school councils that are referred to the Board by the council.

SECTION #8: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

RESPONSIBILITIES:

CONSULTATION: School councils must consult with parents.

MEETINGS:

- At least four per year, open to the public and in a location accessible to the public.
- The first meeting must be held within the first 35 days of the school year.
- Decisions are made only when there is a quorum (a majority of the members are present; and a majority of those present are parent members).
- All activities must be in compliance with the Board policies.

MINUTES AND FINANCIAL RECORDS

- Kept for a four-year period and made available at the school.
- A written annual report (including fundraising) made to the principal and the Board.

PRINCIPAL AND VICE-PRINCIPAL PROFILES

- Prepare/Review and submit annually to the school's superintendent of education, an administrator profile outlining the preferred characteristics of the school's principal and/or vice-principal.

ROUTING OF ADVICE TO THE BOARD

- School councils may make recommendations to the Board by submitting them in writing to the school's superintendent of education. The superintendent of education will, in turn, take responsibility for considering and/forwarding the recommendation to the appropriate person(s) and will subsequently respond to the council.

Recommendations to the Board shall be reflected in the minutes of the respective school council's meeting.

BY-LAWS:

School councils **MUST** make the following by-laws:

- a) election procedures and the filling of vacancies in membership and officers;
- b) rules in cases of conflict of interest;
- c) a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.

School councils **MAY** make by-laws, which include:

- a) the number of parent members and /or community representatives;
- b) limiting the number of times that a member may be re-elected or re-appointed;
- c) that the school council may have two co-chairs;
- d) specifying other officers and/or committees of the school council;
- e) by-laws which govern the conduct of the council's affairs.

SECTION #9: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal of the school shall:

COMMUNICATE

- Give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the meetings to every parent.
- Give a copy of the annual report to every parent.
- Make known the names of members of the school council by newsletter or other means.
- Distribute any materials received from the Ministry or Board to council members.
- Ensure that copies of the minutes are kept at the school and are accessible to all parents.
- Ensure that the school council constitution is readily available to the school community.
- Assist the council in communicating with the school community.

CONSULT

- Seek input from council in areas, which have been identified as priorities, including, but not limited to:
 - a) school policies and guidelines on school code of conduct and appropriate dress for students,
 - b) the school's improvement plans.
- Consider recommendations made by council and provide rationale for decisions made regarding these recommendations.
- Advise council when they are not in compliance with Board policies and procedures.

SUPPORT

- Attend all school council meetings.

- Act as a resource person and assist council in obtaining relevant information.
- Support and promote the school council’s operations and activities.
- Support school community organizations, which operate separately from council,
- Be an effective liaison between council and these organizations.

SECTION #10: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIRS/CO-CHAIRS

- Call school council meetings, prepare the agenda and chair the meetings.
- Communicate with the school principal, senior Board staff and trustees, as required.
- Ensure that-minutes are recorded,
 - parents are consulted,
 - fundraising meets Board policies, and
 - the constitution is reviewed annually.

SECTION #11: RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VICE CHAIR

- Assist and act on behalf of the chair/co-chair.

SECTION #12: RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

The members of the school council are accountable to the parents they represent and MUST:

- Maintain a school-wide perspective on issues.
- Regularly attend school council meetings.
- Participate in information and training programs
- Act as a link between the school council and the community.
- Encourage the participation of all parents within the school community.
- Participate on sub-committees and assist with tasks of the school council.

Note: Board Policy & Procedure #262 are the official documents on which to base any school council decisions. The above is intended to be a simple guideline.

4.3 GUIDE TO THE BOARD'S FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE 133

- Many school councils perform fundraising activities in the name of the school and as such are required to conform with the appropriate sections of *Regulation 612* that deal with fundraising issues. Below are some areas of the procedure on financial management for school councils and other parent fundraising groups.
- The principal is ultimately responsible for activities related to the school and therefore is also responsible for school council activities.
- The fiscal year for school councils is September 1 to August 31 of the following year.
- The Ministry of Education in its document, *School Councils A Guide for Members (2002)*, states **“School councils should be aware that, because the school board is a corporate entity and the school is not, any funds raised by the school council (and any assets purchased with those funds) belong, legally, to the board.”**
- All fundraising activities and expenditures must be conducted in accordance with Board policies. Particular attention needs to be paid to policies on purchasing, conflicts of interest and other similar policies.
- Fundraising is a partnership between the school, the Board and the fundraising group. Regardless of who makes up the fundraising group, the money is being raised in the name of the school.
- The school principal remains responsible, on behalf of the Board, to ensure that all fundraising activities are in compliance with Board policies and procedures.
- Financial reports must be submitted at each school council meeting and the year's activities reported in the school council's annual report and must reflect all activities for the fiscal year ending August 31.
- Signing officers on the school council bank account, where one exists, must include the school principal and a member of the school council.
- Any expenditure of school council money requires the approval of the school council.
- Money collected is to be kept in the school pending deposit to the bank.
- Written monthly reports outlining the sources and uses of the funds (i.e. monthly treasurer's report) and the current financial position of the school council's account (i.e. bank reconciliation) must to be presented at each meeting of the council. It must be noted in the meeting minutes that the treasurer's report has been received and approved.

- Financial records must be reviewed by an independent individual, or individuals, preferably with experience in finance, chosen by the council. Each school council should decide whether or not a formal audit by an accountant is required. This requirement should be included in the council's constitution.
- All records are to be kept for a period of seven years.

TIPS

- It is recommended that where a separate fundraising group exists, it become a sub-committee of the school council.
- It is common practice to have the principal and two members of the school council authorized to sign cheques. Where this is the case, any two of the three signatures, one of which must be the principal, are required.
- To facilitate the issuing of cheques for on going activities such as the payment for pizza on pizza days, the council may wish to authorize activities for which funds can be disbursed and reported at the next council meeting. Other disbursements would require council approval prior to the initiation of the purchase.
- Where possible, two or more individuals should be present when the money is counted and bank deposits are prepared.

4.4 HOW TO WRITE YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

Your Constitution must be written in accordance with Ontario Regulations 612 and 613 as well as the Board's Policy & Procedure #262. (See Appendix B for samples).

The following will **outline** how to put together your council's constitution. Attached are **two sample constitutions**.

- The first is a full-length version that contains most of the articles and by-laws York Region school councils have previously included in their constitutions. If there are additional by-laws you wish to add, please check that they are compliant with the legislation.
- The second **abbreviated sample constitution** that is included contains only the by-laws referred to in the legislation. Many councils may find that this will adequately meet their needs.
- For those who like to keep things really simple, the bare minimum you need to be compliant is the by-laws indicated with a *.

To write your own constitution you can follow these steps, with the samples as guides:

1. The **name and address** of the school council should be written first.
2. Write a brief statement outlining the **vision** or **mission statement** for your school council. This should be done in a brainstorming session with **all** council members.
3. Also with all council members, decide on the **objectives and purposes** for your school council. For example, encouraging parental involvement and/or increasing communication between your school and the school community.
4. The **composition of the membership** of the school council is outlined in YRDSB Procedure #262.0 but you may customize **the number of parent and community members**. You may also outline how the **student representative** may be elected or appointed.
5. Each school council **must** have by-laws governing the **election process**, according to the Ministry of Education Regulation #612. The Ministry document *The Election Process for Use by School Councils*, June 2001, is a handy reference and should be available at every school.

Included in these election by-laws should be:

- *the **voting procedure for electing parent members**,
- *a section concerning the filling of **vacancies** on council, and

- while the **term of office** is set at one year, you may write a by-law that indicates members may seek additional terms or alternatively, you may specify a certain limit on the number of times an individual may seek re-election.
6. The **executive officers** of the council should be clearly specified as well as
 - the **method of electing or appointing** them, and
 - how **officer vacancies** will be filled.
 7. Any **sub-committees** that your school council will have, (for example, Fundraising, Volunteer, Education, etc.) should be listed in the constitution as well as who can be **members of sub-committees**. According to Board Procedure #262.0, you must have at least one parent member of council on each sub-committee.
 8. Other topics in the constitution may concern the effective running of **meetings**:
 - **Number** of meetings per year
 - **Timetable** of the meetings (i.e. when they will occur)
 - **Agendas**
 - **Minutes**
 - **Quorum**
 9. The process of **decision-making** during meetings should be clearly stated. **Consensus** is the preferred method of decision-making but sometimes voting becomes necessary; so you will need to consider how your council will handle **voting during meetings**.
 10. Two other important by-laws that you **must** have in your Constitution are:
 - *what to do in the event of a **conflict of interest**, and
 - *how **internal conflicts** between school council members will be resolved.
 11. Under **finances**, you may want to consider:
 - Who will be the **signing authority**?
 - Should **all funds be spent/allocated in the year** they were **raised**?
 - Should you have an **annual audit**?
 12. Your Constitution should state procedures for an **annual review of the constitution** and how to make necessary **constitutional amendments**.
 13. There are other **local matters** you might feel that are important. Discuss them with your **administrators** and **school community**.
Personalize **your constitution** but remember: you must be compliant with Regulations #612/613 as well as YRDSB Policy & Procedure #262.

4.5 GROUP NORMS: A RESOURCE FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT

Groups of people working together such as school councils, do not become a team overnight. Effective teams evolve and become productive over time. Regardless of their size or composition, teams go through certain stages of development. The length of each stage varies from team to team, and may be as short as several meetings or may last many months. The sequence of stages, however, is the same for each team.

While the specifics of each stage may vary from team to team, the overall nature of each stage is consistent across teams. During the process, some of the actions and feelings of team members may not appear to be productive. This is particularly true during the dissatisfaction stage when a sense of frustration and incompetence frequently emerges. However, working through each stage is a crucial part of the team's evolution.

4.5.1 FORMING

In the orientation stage there is testing and trust building. People are polite, impersonal, watchful, and guarded.

4.5.2 STORMING

There is infighting and goal clarification. People sometimes choose to leave. Conflicts need to be confronted and difficulties discussed. Teams can feel stuck here. This is normal.

4.5.3 NORMING

The commitment builds and teams get organized. Skills are developed and procedures established. The issues are confronted.

4.5.4 PERFORMING

There is maturity and closeness as effectiveness increases. People are more resourceful, creative, and supportive. Progress increases.

Group norms help frame the way people interact and support the development and progression of teams through the stages. At the very least, they will help councils establish a common purpose and assist them when meeting together.

4.5.5 PURPOSE FOR NORMS

- To express the values of the team
- To make sure every team member knows and agrees with what's expected of him/her
- To develop norms that support the needs of the team members and the school
- To help the team evaluate its performance

- To have everyone agree on what's important to the team and provide a guide for behaviour

4.5.6 BENEFITS

- A safety net
- A way to take risks
- A means to achieve higher productivity
- A means to increase our effectiveness

4.5.7 GROUP NORMS ADDRESS

- Things - materials, equipment
- Ideas – issues, opinions, values
- Self – comforts, needs
- People – behaviours, expectations

4.5.8 THE PROCESS

- Reflect on your own individual needs
- Share and list the ideas with your team
- Share with the large group and come to a consensus

4.5.9

SAMPLE

(Norms should be developed cooperatively by the council)

- Agenda set by members and circulated in advance
- Meetings begin and end on time
- Consensus decision-making
- All speakers and opinions are respected
- Individual students, parents, and staff are not discussed
- Be open-minded and objective
- Refer parent or student issues to the teacher or principal

4.6 Rules of Order

Official rules such as Robert's Rules of Order are recommended to help school councils work effectively together.

The following simple rules of order were produced by the *Halton District School Board*.

1. *An individual must be recognized by the chair before obtaining the floor to make a motion. In plain english, this means the chair of the meeting must say it is your turn, before you can speak and formally propose a course of action.*
2. *Once an individual has the floor, he or she may make a formal proposal, or motion, beginning with the statement, "I move..."*
3. *Another individual must second the motion, by saying, "I second the motion". This indicates that he or she agrees that the proposal should be discussed.*
4. *Once a motion is made and seconded, the chair states the question so everyone is clear on what is being proposed. From this point, until the motion has been voted on, all discussion must focus on the question.*
5. *After stating the question, the chair asks if the assembly is ready for the question, or ready to vote on the proposal.*
6. *If no one indicates a desire to speak to the issue, the chair puts the question or conducts the vote by asking for those in favour and those opposed. (The vote may be conducted by a show of hands, by standing or by ballot.*
7. *If members of the group wish to discuss the motion, the chair opens debate. Each participant may speak to the question twice, but no one may speak the second time until everyone has had the chance to speak once. Once debate is complete, the chair puts the question.*
8. *The majority needed to pass the motion should be a majority plus one (e.g. 51%). In case of a tie the motion is lost.*

Amending a motion

Up until the chair states the question, the person making the motion may change it, (although the seconder may withdraw and the changed motion may need another seconder). Once the chair has stated the question, however, the motion must be formally amended in order to be changed.

- 1) *the person making the motion may propose to modify it. The chair will ask if anyone objects. If they do, the question to modify the motion is put to a vote. If the group consents to the modification, debate continues on the motion as amended.*

- 2) *Another individual can move to amend the motion by stating, “ I move to amend the motion by....”. From here, the process is the same as for any other motion – steps 3 through 8 on the previous page.*
- 3) *An amendment to the amendment may also be proposed, but a third amendment is out of order.*
- 4) *After the amendment has been dealt with, discussion returns to the original motion.*

Withdrawing a motion

- 1) *At any time before a vote, the person making the original motion may ask to withdraw it. The motion to withdraw does not require a seconder. Once the motion is withdrawn, it is as if it never existed.*
- 2) *If the chair has already stated the question and a request to withdraw the motion is made, the chair asks if there is any objection. If there is none, the motion is withdrawn. If someone objects, the request to withdraw the motion is put to a vote.*

Tabling a motion

A motion to table a motion means to set it aside to discuss at another time so more pressing business can be discussed, or so more information about the issue can be obtained.

- *The motion to table takes precedence over the motion being discussed.*
- *The motion to table requires a seconder.*
- *There can be no debate on a motion to table.*

Motions that are Null and Void

Any motion that contradicts provincial [statutes] and regulations or Board policies is out of order, even if the motion was voted on and passed by a majority vote.

4.7 AGENDAS, MINUTES AND FINANCIAL RECORDS FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS

4.7.1 AGENDAS

- A carefully planned and organized agenda is the foundation of a successful meeting. A good agenda briefly outlines what you intend to discuss and in what order. Items on the agenda should reflect the concerns and interests of your school community.
- Each meeting's agenda can be as simple or as complex as you want. The items can be numbered as well as listing the speaker who will address each topic. Some word processing programs have an agenda wizard, which in addition to preparing your agenda will also give the secretary itemized pages to record the minutes.
- The agenda should be prepared by the chair in consultation with the principal and distributed to each council member, one week prior to the meeting.
- At the beginning of each meeting the chair should ask if anyone has items to add to the agenda.

4.7.2 MINUTES

- The minutes are a wonderful reference tool for council members. They provide continuity from one meeting to the next.
- Your council secretary can keep minutes in the form of notes or record the minutes according to Robert's Rules of Order.
- Minutes should be written up and distributed within two weeks of the meeting. They should be passed at the next regular meeting. Copies of minutes must be kept in the main office for anyone to see, at any time as well as posted on a school notice board or website.

4.7.3 FINANCIAL RECORDS

- There must be accurate records of all financial transactions for the council to refer to as needed.
- Treasurers can do the book keeping, using the method they find easiest, from manual accounting to programs like Quick Books; there are different choices available. Consult the previous treasurer and use their recommendations in your decision.
- The key point to remember is that this money is entrusted to council. You are accountable to the school community for the spending of this money and you must comply with Board policies when disbursing this money.
- Similarly fundraising activities must also comply with the policies established by the Board. Funds may be raised and spent for a purpose approved by the Board, in accordance with Board policies. Textbooks and materials that support the curriculum should be paid for from the school budget.
- Your council should decide who will have signing authority. It should always be two signatures, on your cheques: the principal, the treasurer and/or the chair.

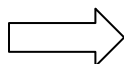
- Each month, the Treasurer should make a monthly report and at the end of the year, provide an annual report to the school community. In addition, they should have the books audited by an independent authority, annually.

Both minutes and financial records are to be kept for a minimum of four years. They are both to be available for anyone to see without charge.

4.8 GUIDE TO SCHOOL COUNCIL AGENDA

Outlined below are the various agenda items that might appear on your council’s agenda. Included are tasks specified in the Board Procedure and Ministry Regulations as well as other items that are a regular part of most council meetings. There are many other items that will appear throughout the year and should be added accordingly. This is intended only as a rough guide to help you organize your year.

At every meeting:



- Welcome/Introductions
- Review the agenda
- Adopt previous minutes
- Correspondence
- Student Council report (where appropriate)
- Principal/VP report
- Teacher Report
- Financial report
- Report from other committees
- New Business
- Date of next meeting/Adjourn

September	October	November/December
Election of officers Review mission/yearly goals Appoint community member or brainstorm on ways of recruiting Establish Operative Norms Establish sub-committees Report from principal on current School Plan Identify priorities	Team building Develop communication plan Develop fundraising plan: main fundraisers, spending priorities Review school budget Begin work on school survey	EQAO results Share survey results Possible guest speaker Discuss capital improvement projects
January/February	March/April	May/June
Review principal profile Review school profile Possible guest speaker Capital improvement projects	Establish School Plan committee & brainstorm for next year Review constitution Review code of behavior Review homework policy	Adopt new constitution Presentation of new school plan Review slate of officers needed for next year Set date for election Year end financial report Finalize annual report

APPENDIX A: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *Can Board employees be members of council? What about spouses of employees?*

Answer:

A Board employee who does not work in the local school is permitted to fill any position on council for which he/she is otherwise eligible (except chair) providing he/she informs the electors of his/her employment. Employees who work in the local school for which they are seeking a position on council may only seek the staff position for which they are eligible (that is, teaching or support staff representative). School assistants are exempt from the limitations of this provision. The eligibility of employees' spouses is not limited in any way. For the purposes of eligibility, "employee" is defined as a "member of a bargaining unit, a manager, or an administrator" (see section 4.2.2).

2. *How are school council elections to be conducted?*

Answer:

It is important that basic democratic principles have been adhered to in planning annual elections and that a bylaw be prepared that clearly outlines the election process to all members of the school community. It is essential that all parents have a right to express their willingness to run for council. Details regarding the elections and the list of candidates must be well publicized and elections are to be by secret ballot. In the past, many council elections have been by acclamation. It is anticipated that this will continue in some cases. Election by acclamation is an accepted democratic practice providing all other principles are followed (see section 4.2.3).

The level of campaigning, the use of candidate profiles, speech requirements and other specifics regarding the elections should be clarified in each council's bylaws. A word of caution: Many parents will be less likely to run if the process is too complicated or demanding.

3. *How is the chair of the council selected?*

Answer:

The chair and all other officers of the council are to be elected by the council from among the members elected/appointed to the council. The chair(s) must be a parent member. There is not to be a direct election of officers by the community at large.

4. *How should school council conflicts be handled?*

Answer:

Each school council is to have a bylaw regarding conflict resolution. A sample will be included in the school council handbook. It is important to be proactive in managing conflict. Building strong relationships and trust is critical. So too, is practising open communication. Don't let conflicts smolder. Bylaws regarding conflict resolution should

focus on solving problems within the council. You are encouraged to make good use of your principal as a resource. If the conflict cannot be resolved internally, your school superintendent should be contacted. She or he may act as a facilitator and provide clarification of relevant Board policies, procedures or Ministry regulations.

5. *Is fundraising a legitimate function of a school council? What can be purchased with funds raised by the council?*

Answer:

Regulation 613 recognizes fundraising as a legitimate and worthwhile activity for school councils. It can be an effective way for councils to achieve their overriding purpose of supporting student learning in their local school. Fundraising must, however, be carried out in accordance with Board policies on fundraising and funds must be spent on Board approved items. These are critical requirements so that all councils remain compliant with Board and Ministry legislation and are thereby protected legally by the Board. Refer to Procedure 133 for details.

6. *Should our council take out liability insurance? Are we covered by the Board's liability insurance?*

Answer:

School councils that are acting in accordance with Ministry legislation and all relevant Board policies and procedures are protected legally by the Board.

7. *Can everyone who shows up at a council meeting be considered to be a member and therefore vote on decisions/recommendations of the council?*

Answer:

This practice would be inconsistent with Board and Ministry policy. Members of councils are those who have been duly elected/appointed according to Board Procedure 262 and the constitution of the local council. All attendees at meetings should have an opportunity to have input into the discussions of the council but responsibility for making decisions is up to the duly elected council members who represent the entire school community. It should also be noted that voting on controversial issues is seldom the best approach. Reaching a consensus that all members can support is often the better way to handle matters of this nature.

8. *Who do I call for clarification if I have any further questions about school council matters?*

Answer:

The first person to contact for clarification on school council legislation and Board policy is your local school principal. He or she is the agent of the Board in your school and is knowledgeable of these matters. If necessary, the next person to contact is your school's superintendent. Should the matter require further clarification, you may contact Superintendent Ken Thurston at 905-764-6830 or by email: ken.thurston@yrdsb.edu.on.ca.

APPENDIX B - SAMPLE CONSTITUTIONS

(Name of School) School Council Constitution

Table of Contents:

Article 1: Name and Address

Article 2: Mission Statement

Article 3: Purpose and Objectives

Article 4: Procedures and Guidelines

Article 5: Membership

- 5.1: Number of Parent Members
- 5.2: Number of Community Representatives
- 5.3: Student Representative
- 5.4: Other Members

Article 6: Elections

- 6.1: Acclamations
- 6.2: Election Procedures for Parent Members
- 6.3: Terms of Office
- 6.4: Vacancies in Membership
- 6.5: Resignations
- 6.6: Removal

Article 7: Executive

- 7.1: Chair/Co-Chair
- 7.2: Officers
- 7.3: Vacancies in Office

Article 8: Sub-Committees

- 8.1: Establishment
- 8.2: Sub-Committee Membership
- 8.3: Chairs of Sub-Committees

Article 9: Meetings

- 9.1: Timetable
- 9.2: Quorum
- 9.3: Decision-Making
- 9.4: Conflict of Interest
- 9.5: Conflict Resolution

Article 10: Financial

- 10.1: Signing Authorities
- 10.2: Disbursement and Allocation of Funds
- 10.3: Annual Audit

Article 11: Agendas and Minutes

Article 12: Constitutional Amendments

Appendices:

Appendix I: YRDSB Policy and Procedure #262

Appendix II: Ministry of Education, *The Election Process for Use by School Councils*, June 2001

(Name of School)
School Council Constitution

Article 1: Name and Address

The organization will be known as *(name of school)* school council. The members of the school council shall be responsible for maintaining the constitution.

Any School

Any Street

Any town, Ontario

L4C 8V3

School Phone Number

Article 2: Mission Statement

Example 1:

Our school council believes that collaborative partnerships among the school, the family, and the community are essential to improving student learning and increasing a shared sense of accountability for public education.

Example 2:

Our school council is a collaborative and co-operative body whose mission is to facilitate a partnership between members of the school community to achieve the highest possible standards of education in an inviting and wholesome environment.

Example 3: (For French Immersion Schools)

Our school council is a partnership of parents, staff, community and students. Its' goal is to actively promote a positive learning environment in both official languages, which will enhance the quality of the students' education.

Article 3: Purpose and Objectives

Individual councils should choose objectives and purposes that reflect their beliefs.

Here are some examples:

1. Encourage effective parental involvement in the education of their children.
2. Provide a means for regular communication and dialogue between all partners in education.
3. Participate in the school improvement planning process.
4. Provide meaningful consultation and extensive involvement of all members of the school community.
5. Foster parental and community involvement in education.
6. Encourage meaningful involvement of all members of the school community in support of student learning.
7. Provide input into decisions made by the school administration, the Board and the Ministry.

8. Encourage effective parental involvement by focusing on the following areas: parenting skills, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with community.
9. Help to co-ordinate the services for school, family and community partnerships related to social, health, recreational and nutrition programs that assist in the education of children.
10. Facilitate the building of a viable school community, which works together in the best interests of our students and their education.

Article 4: Procedures and Operating Guidelines

The operational procedures of this council are outlined in YRDSB Procedure #262, see Appendix 1. All recommendations and activities of the council shall comply with all Ministry of Education Acts, York Region District School Board Policies and Procedures and Staff Collective Agreements.

Article 5: Membership

(You may choose to specify the number of parent and community members. If not specified, there will be six parent members and one community member as per Board Procedure #262.)

There shall be no more than one member on the school council from any one household.

5.1: Number of Parent Members

The number of parents on the school council will be ____.

5.2: Number of Community Representatives

The number of community representatives will be ____ *(not to exceed four)*.

5.3: Student Representative

Option 1 – Elementary The Principal will appoint the student representative.	Option 2 – Secondary The students will elect the student representative.	Option 3 – Secondary Student council will appoint one student.
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5.4: Other Members

Other members such as teacher representative and support staff representative shall be elected/appointed in accordance with YRDSB Policy #262.

Article 6: Elections

6.1: Acclamations

Parent elections shall be by acclamation when the number of candidates is equal to, or less than the number of parent member positions on the council.

*6.2: Election Procedures for Parent Members

1. Each parent/guardian seeking election must be nominated or self-nominated in writing, must have a child registered at the school, and must declare if he or she is employed by the Board.
2. Each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school shall be entitled to one vote for each vacant parent/guardian membership position on the council.
3. The school council shall strike an election committee in May, to help plan the election process, the gathering of nominations, and the running of the election. No one standing for election, or the spouse of anyone standing for election, shall be a member of the election committee.
4. The election committee shall:
 - provide nomination forms
 - ensure that the school community is notified of election procedures and election date(s), location, and time, at least fourteen days in advance of election;
 - request a profile from all candidates and make these available to the electorate;
 - conduct the elections by secret ballot;
 - count the ballots;
 - help the principal notify all candidates of the results;
 - keep all the results and related information confidential;
 - only release the names of successful candidates. A list of candidates and the vote results will be kept on file for use in the event of vacancy on the council.
 - shall notify all individuals standing for election of the results before the results are released to the school community.
 -

6.3: Terms of Office

<i>Option 1:</i> Elected and appointed members may only serve ___ terms.	<i>Option 2:</i> Elected and appointed members may seek additional terms of office.
---	--

***6.4: Vacancies in Membership**

- **A vacancy in the membership of a school council does not prevent the council from exercising its' authority.**
- If parent member positions remain vacant on council, after the election, the council may appoint parent members.
- Positions that become vacant due to resignation or removal shall be filled as soon as possible by:
 - offering the person with the next largest number of votes who was not elected, the opportunity to accept the position.
 - Where there are not enough candidates to fill the vacancies, notice will be sent to all parents informing them of the vacancies and application by interested volunteers sought.
 - If there are more applications than positions, an election will be called.
 - When no more candidates are available, council may appoint parent members.
- Vacancies will only be filled until June of the current year, at which time the vacant positions will be filled through September elections.

6.5: Resignations

- Anyone who is a council member, except the principal, may resign their position by writing a letter of resignation to the chair.
- If someone resigns the position vacated will be filled according to Article 6.4 Vacancies.

6.6: Removal

The council may choose to remove from council any member who misses ___ consecutive meetings and shall undertake to replace that person according to Article 6.4: Vacancies.

Article 7: Executive

7.1: Chair/Co-Chair

Option 1: At the first meeting after the elections, council will elect a chair or two co-chairs.	Option 2: At the first meeting after the elections, council will elect a chair.
---	--

An employee of the Board cannot be chair.

7.2: Other Officers

At the first meeting of the school year, the council will elect or appoint the following officers:

Secretary and Treasurer. *(Please specify any other officers, your council will have.)*

7.3: Vacancies in Office

Officer vacancies will be filled as soon as possible according to Article 7.1 and 7.2.

Article 8: Sub-Committees

8.1: Establishment

At the first meeting of the school year, sub-committees may be formed to:

- conduct more detailed or in-depth work than is possible during council meetings,
- make recommendations to the council,
- keep the council informed of issues and developments in its’ particular area.

(Please specify only the committees that are appropriate to your council.)

Budget	Education	Policy and Procedure
Capital Improvements	Election	Social
Communications	Fundraising	Volunteer
Constitution	Health and Safety	

Additional sub-committees will be formed by council as the need arises.

8.2: Sub-Committee Membership

- Each sub-committee must contain at least one parent member of council.
- Persons, who are not members of council, may be members of sub-committees.

8.3: Chairs of Sub-Committees

<p>Option 1 Each sub-committee will appoint its own chair.</p>	<p>Option 2 Council will appoint a chair for each sub-committee it forms.</p>
--	---

Article 9: Meetings

9.1: Timetable of Meetings

- At the first meeting of the new school year, a timetable will be created which states the meeting dates agreed to for that school year.
- A copy of these dates and times will be included in communication(s) to the families of the school.
- It is recognized that the timetable may change at any time.
- A copy of the list of dates and times of meetings will be sent to the local trustee.

9.2: Quorum

A meeting will have quorum if:

- The majority of council members are present
AND
- The majority of those present are parents.

A meeting of council can be held if there is no quorum but all voting will be deferred.

9.3: Decision-making

- The preferred method to resolve issues on council is by consensus. Consensus is a collective opinion or general agreement by ALL the council members.

In the case where a decision cannot be reached through consensus, the chair may decide on one of the following:

- To have a vote by way of a show of hands or a silent vote by those present in which a 51% majority shall carry the vote
- To defer the issue to the next meeting
- To defer the issue to a special meeting
- To defer the issue to a sub-committee

*9.4: Conflict of Interest

- If individual council members perceive themselves to be in conflict of interest, they are honour bound to declare their conflict at the earliest possible opportunity and at the time of the meeting, so the minutes may reflect this declaration.
- Council members cannot receive any remuneration for their work as a member of council.

*9.5: Conflict Resolution

The council will undertake to resolve all internal conflicts within its' mandate in a timely manner.

The council will abide by any conflict resolution policy issued by the Board.

Article 10: Financial Records

10.1: Signing Authorities

<p>Option 1 the treasurer and the chair can be signing authorities. Two of three signatures will be required on the account.</p>	<p>Option 2 The chair and the treasurer are the signing authorities. Both signatures will be required.</p>
--	--

10.2: Disbursement and Allocation of Money

All money must be collected by the end of the year. Funds should be dispersed or allocated to a specific purpose by the end of the year.

10.3: Annual Audit

Each year, there will be an independent audit of the school council books performed by an accountant.

Article 11: Agendas and Minutes

11.1: Agendas

- Agenda items should be submitted to the chair one week prior to the council's next meeting.
- The chair will set the agenda with the principal, prior to the meeting.

11.2: Minutes

- Minutes shall be posted in the school prior to the next meeting of the council.
- The minutes shall include motions, decisions and actions to be taken.
- Members of the council must inform the chair if they are going to be absent from a council meeting.

Article 12: Constitutional Amendments

- The school council will review the constitution every two years or as the need arises. A sub-committee can perform the review and bring proposed amendments to the school council for voting.
- Amendments to the constitution must be presented to the council, at a regularly scheduled meeting.
- Constitutional amendments need a 2/3 majority to be passed.

*Note: All items in bold are mandated and cannot be changed. All items in italics are suggestions for the writing of a constitution and should not appear in the constitution itself. Items that appear with an * are bylaws which MUST be included (although you may choose to change the wording) as per Ministry of Education Regulation #612/613.*

Abbreviated Sample Constitution

(Name of School)
**SCHOOL COUNCIL
CONSTITUTION**

Article 1: Name and Address

The organization will be known as *(name of school)* school council. The members of the school council shall be responsible for maintaining the constitution.

Any School

Any Street

Any town, Ontario

L4C 8V3

School Phone Number

Article 2: Procedures and Operating Guidelines

The operational procedures of this council are outlined in the YRDSB Policy and Procedure #262, available on the Board's website. All recommendations and activities of the Council shall comply with all Ministry of Education Acts, York Region District School Board Policies and Procedures and Staff Collective Agreements.

Article 3: Membership

(You may choose to specify the number of parent and community members. If not specified, there will be six parent members and one community member as per Board Procedure #262.)

3.1: Number of Parent Members

The number of parents on the school council will be ____.

3.2: Number of Community Representatives

The number of community representatives will be ____ *(not to exceed four)*.

Article 4: Elections

4.1: Acclamations

Parent elections shall be by acclamation when the number of candidates is equal to, or less than the number of parent member positions on the council.

*4.2: Election Procedures for Parent Members

- **Each parent/guardian seeking election must be nominated or self-nominated in writing, must have a child registered at the school, and must declare if he or she is employed by the Board.**
- **Each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school shall be entitled to one vote for each vacant parent/guardian membership position on the council.**

4.3: Terms of Office

<p><i>Option 1</i> Elected and appointed members may seek additional terms of office.</p>	<p><i>Option 2</i> Elected and appointed members may serve _____ terms.</p>
---	---

*4.4: Vacancies in Membership

- **A vacancy in the membership of a school council does not prevent the council from exercising its’ authority.**
- If positions remain vacant, after the election, the council may appoint parent members.
- Positions that become vacant due to resignation or removal shall be filled as soon as possible by offering the person with the next highest number of votes, the opportunity to accept the position. When there are no more candidates available, council may appoint parent members.

Article 5: The Executive

5.1: The Chair

Option 1
At the first meeting after the elections, the council will elect one chair or two co-chairs.

Option 2
At the first meeting after the elections, the council will elect one chair.

5.2: Other Officers

At the first meeting of the school year, the council will elect a secretary and treasurer.
(Specify any other officers to be elected or appointed by council.)

5.3: Vacancies in Office

Officer vacancies will be filled as soon as possible according to Article 5.1 and 5.2.

Article 6: Sub-Committees

At the first meeting of the school year, the following sub-committees may be formed to conduct more in-depth work or to make recommendations to the council:

(Please specify only the committees that are appropriate to your council.)

Communications Fundraising Health and Safety Volunteer

Additional sub-committees will be formed as the need arises.

Sub-committees must include at least one parent member of council and may include persons who are not members of the school council.

Article 7: Conflict

***7.1: Conflict of Interest**

If individual council members perceive themselves to be in conflict of interest, they are honour bound to declare their conflict at the earliest possible opportunity and at the time of the meeting, so the minutes may reflect this declaration.

***7.2: Conflict Resolution**

The council will undertake to resolve all internal conflicts within its' mandate in a timely manner.

Article 8: Constitutional Amendments

Constitutional amendments need a 2/3 majority to be passed.

*Footnote: All items in bold are mandated and cannot be changed. All items in italics are suggestions for the writing of a constitution and should not appear in the constitution itself. Items that appear with an * are bylaws which MUST be included (although you may choose to change the wording) as per Ministry of Education Regulation #612.*

APPENDIX C: TYPES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

taken from Education Improvement Commission’s **School Improvement Planning Handbook**

Type of involvement	School’s role	Examples of how the school can help
Parenting	Help parents establish homes that support students.	<p>Offer suggestions that will support learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your child what happened at school each day. • Encourage your child to read nightly by providing him/her with books. • If possible, have a quiet area in the house where your child can do homework. • Try to have your child complete homework at a regular time each day.
		<p>Offer parents opportunities to learn more about parenting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about parenting courses in the community. • Hold workshops in the evening and have videos/articles for parents to borrow on parenting and child development.
		<p>Offer family support programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with community partners so that parents can receive important information about children’s health issues (e.g., nutrition).
		<p>Get to know the parents in the school’s community, and encourage them to get to know the school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make home visits or phone calls at the beginning of the school year to welcome parents into the school and help them understand it, and to enable school staff to become acquainted with individual parents and their uniqueness.
Communicating	Offer many opportunities for home-to-school and school-to-home communication about school programs and students’ progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a conference with all parents at least once a year, and follow up as needed. • Provide translation as needed for all important communications. • Send home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parental review and comment. • Ensure that every parent has an interview with the child’s teacher after the child’s first report card each year. • Provide parents with clear information about choosing courses, programs, and other school activities. • Ensure that all parents receive at least one good-news phone call a term. • Ensure that parents of children at risk are aware of their child’s situation and have an opportunity to provide input about the remedy.

Closely adapted from Epstein, Joyce L., L. Coates, K.C. Salinas, M.G. Sanders, and B.S. Simon, *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1997). Copyright 1997 by Corwin Press. Adapted with permission of Corwin Press.

[continues, next page]

Volunteering	Invite parents to volunteer in the school, and organize to make them feel welcome.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide school and classroom volunteer opportunities, where parents can help teachers, students, administrators, and other parents. • Provide parents with training for the specific job the school would like them to do. • Ask a parent committee to coordinate the work of volunteers. • If possible, provide a “volunteer room” or other place where volunteers can gather. • Conduct an annual survey to collect information about the talents and interests of parents in the school community. • Arrange for one parent per class to act as a liaison for all parents. Establish a telephone “tree” for each class. • Show parent volunteers that you appreciate their help with a celebration.
Helping students learn at home	Provide ideas and information to parents about how to help students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, plans, and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to parents on what students will learn in each subject area. • Hold curriculum evenings for parents. • Involve parents in creating the school’s homework policy, and then inform all parents of the policy. • Provide students with clear instructions for their homework assignments, so that parents can help with homework. • Provide parents with a schedule of homework that alerts them to one or more assignments that will require students to work with their parents to complete the task. • Provide calendars of school/curriculum activities for parents. • Encourage parents to work with their children in setting goals. • Hold student-led conferences once a year to discuss each student’s progress. • Ensure parents understand the provincial report card and the reporting process.
Participating in decision making about their children’s education	Include parents in the school’s decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage school councils to focus on student achievement and student activities. • Ask parents to participate in the development of the school’s homework policies. • Ask parents to participate in the development and implementation of behaviour policies.
Developing partnerships within the community	Identify resources in the community that can help the school improve the level of student achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents with information about community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs and services. • Provide parents with information about community activities that could enhance student learning and students’ skills and talents, including summer programs. • Develop partnerships with community service organizations such as counselling, health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other agencies.

Closely adapted from Epstein, Joyce L., L. Coates, K.C. Salinas, M.G. Sanders, and B.S. Simon, *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1997). Copyright 1997 by Corwin Press. Adapted with permission of Corwin Press.

APPENDIX D - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CUPE Canadian Union of Public Employees.	JK Junior Kindergarten.
DSB District School Board.	Junior Division Grades 4 to 6.
EDU Ministry of Education. An abbreviation used by the ministry in some of its publications.	OAC (phased out June 2003) Ontario Academic Course. The senior academic year following Grade 12.
EIC Education Improvement Commission. The Commission's mandate ended December 2000, however, reference is still made to their work.	OSR Ontario Student Record.
Elementary level/panel Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8. (Also see the definitions for <i>Primary Division</i> , <i>Junior Division</i> , and <i>Intermediate Division</i>).	OSSD Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
EQAO Education Quality and Accountability Office. A crown agency established in 1996 to measure and communicate the achievements of students, schools and school boards, through province-wide assessments of students and through other indicators.	OSSTF Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.
ETFO Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.	OTF Ontario Teachers' Federation, an umbrella organization for the OSSTF and ETFO.
FOIPOP Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.	Primary Division Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3.
IEP Individual Education Plan. A special education plan developed for a student who has been identified as exceptional through the IRPC process.	SEAC Special Education Advisory Committee. A committee established by each school board to monitor the board's special education programs, services and plans.
Intermediate Division Grades 7 & 8.	Secondary Level Grades 9 to 12 (OAC phased out June 2003).
IPRC Identification, Placement and Review Committee. A committee comprised of at least three individual, at least one of whom must be a principal or a supervisory officer, who decide whether individual students should be formally identified as exceptional for the purpose of providing special education support.	SK Senior Kindergarten.

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The 2001-02 School Council Handbook Committee:

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For their input, - in alphabetical order:

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Gerry Harrison, President, OSSTF-York Region; Gord Kerr, Parent & School Council Chair;
Louise Moreau, Manager of Special Education; Barry McKillop, Curriculum Consultant
Beate Planche, Superintendent of Education; Linda Porteous, Secretary - Special Education.

The following school councils:

Bayview Hill Public School	Beverly Acres Public School
Buttonville Public School	Crosby Heights Public School
Crosslands Public School	Denne Public School
Newmarket High School	Queensville Public School
Regency Acres Public School	Richmond Hill High School
Stonehaven Public School	Thornhill Public School
Unionville High School	Vaughan Secondary School

The 2001-02 School Council Policy and Procedure Review Committee (in alphabetical order):

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Dave McCaffrey, School Council Member; Mary McElrea, School Council Chair;
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Ken Thurston, Superintendent of Education; and Judy Ulrich, School Council Member.

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