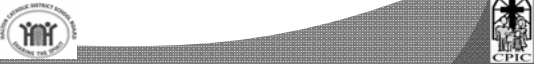


Key Elements for an Effective School Council

CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL TRAINING 101


Purpose

- Plays an important role in student success
- Encourages a strong partnership between the school, home and parish
- Help parents become actively involved in education of their children
- Help good schools become better



Expectations of a Catholic School Council

- Advise the principal
- Advise the Board, where appropriate
- Place the interest of students first
- Support the School Improvement Planning
- Encourage parent involvement



Catholic School Council Organization

- Majority of council must be parents/guardians of students enrolled at the school
- Minimum of nine members
- Student representative required at secondary school



Catholic School Council Membership

- Parents – minimum of 5
- Principal
- Community Representative
- Teacher Representative
- Support Staff Representative
- Parish Representative
- Student (secondary)



Recruiting New Members

- Make school council visible in the school
- Welcome new families
- Develop strategies to connect to parents from all communities
- Let parents know about council meetings and outcomes
- Meeting must be informative, efficient and convenient



Elections

- ⦿ School council elections must be held in the first 30 days of the school year
- ⦿ Members must be nominated (or self nominated)
- ⦿ Principal must give written notice of election, time and date at least 14 days ahead



Term of Office

- ⦿ Members may be on council for more than one term
- ⦿ The term is one year
- ⦿ Parent participation should be staggered such that no more than half the council is new each year



Role of Catholic School Council

- ⦿ School councils advise principals, superintendents and school trustees
- ⦿ Topics may include:
 - School calendar
 - Code of behaviour and dress codes
 - School program priorities
 - Selection criteria for principals and vice principals
 - Extracurricular activities



Role of Catholic School Council (cont)

- School based services
- Fundraising policies
- Conflict resolution policies
- School improvement planning
- Board policies



Catholic School Council Recommendations

- ⦿ Principal and the Board must consider council recommendations
- ⦿ Principal and the Board must advise the council of actions taken in response to recommendations



Catholic School Council Responsibilities

- ⦿ Establish and review council goals, objectives, action plans and procedures each year
- ⦿ Holds a minimum of four meetings each year
- ⦿ Organizes training for council members
- ⦿ Communicates regularly with parents and the school community
- ⦿ Keeps minutes of its meetings and records of all financial transactions



Financial Statement

- ⦿ Prepares an annual financial statement for council activities from Sept 1 to Aug 31
- ⦿ Communicates financial statement to the parents and school community



Annual Report

- ⦿ Prepares an annual report summarizing school council activities conducted from Sept 1 to Aug 31
- ⦿ Submits the report to the HCDSB



Quorum at Meetings

- ⦿ A meeting of school council cannot be held unless:
 - A majority of the current members are present
 - A majority of members present at the meeting are parent members
- ⦿ Without quorum, issues may be discussed but council cannot consider or approve motions



Constitution

- ⦿ Every catholic school council should have a constitution
- ⦿ A constitution
 - defines the Catholic School Council's purpose
 - Explains how council will be structured
 - Describes the rights and responsibilities of council members and executive



Bylaws

- ⦿ Bylaws guide school council operations and activities and must be in compliance with Ministry of Education Regulation 612/00
- ⦿ Bylaws address:
 - Election procedures
 - Filling council vacancies
 - Conflict of interest
 - Conflict resolution



Responsibilities of Catholic School Council Chair (co-Chair)

- ⦿ Must be a Catholic Parent
- ⦿ Supervises council activities and procedures
- ⦿ Prepares council agenda and chairs meetings
- ⦿ Communicates regularly with school principal
- ⦿ Ensures regular communication between council and school community



Responsibilities (cont)

- Ensures fundraising activities and use of funds comply with board policies and guidelines
- Prepares annual report of school council activities



Responsibilities of Vice-Chair (optional)

- Assumes the role of the chair when the chair is absent
- Assists the chair, as needed



Responsibilities of Secretary

- Records, maintains and reports accurate minutes of council meetings, including all council decisions
- Ensure minutes are available in school office for review by parents and students
- Acts as corresponding secretary for council



Responsibilities of Treasurer (optional)

- To liaison between the Finance Committee and the Catholic School Council
- Reports to the Catholic School Council decisions made by the Finance Committee
- Prepares report on fundraising activities
- Does NOT have signing authority



Responsibilities of a Finance Committee (optional)

- Through the Catholic School Council Bylaws a Finance Committee can be created as a subcommittee
- Includes Representatives from the Catholic School Council (including the treasurer), staff and parents
- Makes decisions with regards to how funds raised are utilized.
- The school has one bank account that is managed by the administrative staff



Responsibilities of Principal

- The principal does not hold a vote on school council
- Attends all school council meetings
- Assists and supports school council activities
- Requests advice from school council in areas where council has advisory responsibilities



Principal (cont)

- Considers council recommendations and informs council of actions taken
- Communicates regularly with school council chair
- Distributes materials provided by MoE and acts as a resource on Board and Ministry policies and procedures
- Approves all communication to the school community distributed through the school



Responsibilities of School Council Members

- Attend and participate in council meetings
- Maintain a school-wide perspective
- Attend and participate in information and training sessions
- Encourage participation of parents and representatives from all groups



Council Members (cont)

- Act as a link between the school and the community
- Support and promote decisions reached by council
- Act in the best interests of the school and students
- Ensure that executive positions on the council are filled



Council Members (cont)

- Members are expected to behave responsibly and ethically
- Adhere to code of ethics as established
- Declare conflicts of interest where they occur



10 WAYS TO GET YOUR CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL OFF TO A FLYING START

1 - Recruit

- Get people involved
- Encourage parents to come out to council meetings
- Everyone has a contribution to make
- Experience of being a council member can be very rewarding



2 - Communicate

- ⦿ Communication is the key to success
- ⦿ Establish open communication between the council and your school community
- ⦿ Take advantage of all opportunities
- ⦿ The more people hear your message, the more interested they will be



3 - Welcome

- ⦿ A warm smile and welcoming attitude
- ⦿ Make a point of greeting newcomers and introduce them to council members
- ⦿ Include some social time at every meeting
- ⦿ Make people feel comfortable and involved



4 - Inform

- ⦿ Give parents the information they need to participate actively in school council meetings
- ⦿ Explain the purpose and role of council
- ⦿ Outline the responsibilities of members
- ⦿ Let parents know how they can take part in council activities



5 - Organize

- Meetings need to be productive, efficient and well managed
- Prepare an agenda with time limits and distribute before the meeting
- Start and end the meetings on time
- Stay on topic and keep discussion to the timeframe on the agenda
- Share information clearly and simply
- Listen carefully to each speaker and treat all viewpoints with respect



6 - Guide

- Set clear guidelines for your council meetings
- Based on board school council policy, decide how you will make decisions
- Make sure everyone knows how to express an opinion and share ideas



7 - Share

- Develop a common purpose
- Discuss the best ways to support student achievement
- Make sure everyone is aware of the school's mission, vision and values



8 - Prioritize

- ⦿ Establish goals and objectives for your council
- ⦿ Set realistic targets
- ⦿ Stay focused on priorities
- ⦿ Council will get a real sense of accomplishment when they hit their targets



9 - Plan

- ⦿ Develop actions plans for your goals and objectives
- ⦿ Assign specific tasks and responsibilities with defined timelines



10 - Record

- ⦿ Keep accurate records of your council meetings, activities and events
- ⦿ Distribute and publicly post minutes as soon as possible after the meeting
- ⦿ Minutes will help to prepare your annual report
- ⦿ Minutes will provide a clear and detailed record of your decisions and plans