

School Council Basics presented at PIAC Parent Conference, 2014

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School Council Basics

What is PIC?

- PIC stands for Parent Involvement Committees (PIC)
- It is the 2005 Ontario Parent Involvement Policy of Ministry of Education (EDU)
- Each school board must have Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)
- It is an important advisory body to school boards
- It is a parent-led committee, the director and a trustee are also members

What is PIAC? (Parent Involvement Advisory Committee)

- It is TDSB's PIC
- Web site: <http://www.torontopiac.com>
- All parents are welcome to attend PIAC meetings as observers

What is a School Council?

- An organization in the school which provides “a forum through which parents and other members of the school community can contribute to improving student achievement and school performance”
- School Councils: A Guide for Members; Ontario Regulation 612/00 (2001, Revised 2002)
- School councils are governed by Ontario Regulation 612/00, and 613/00 made under Regulation 298
- School Council is inclusive, accountable and transparent
- School Councils are able to make recommendations to the principal and school board on any matter
- The partnership of school and community representatives on a school council helps to build mutual understanding and interaction between a school and its community, resulting in benefits for both

Purpose of a School Council

- *The purpose of a school council is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.*

Reg. 612/2.1

How does the School Council help you?

- Membership on a school council also benefits the individuals involved. The personal advantages of becoming a school council member include:
 - being an **important partner** in the education system, whose views are valued
 - **contributing** to the shared goal of improving **student achievement and well-being**
 - having a vehicle through which to **express opinions**
 - being able to keep **informed** about what is happening at the school and the board, and at the province

Regulations Governing School Councils

- **Ontario Regulation 612/00** and **Regulation 298** together address three key areas:
 - the purpose of school councils
 - operational matters, and
 - the obligation of boards and principals to consult with school councils
- School councils are
 - advisory bodies, and
 - may make recommendations to their principals or school board on any matter
- Principals have to report back on how the recommendations have been taken into account
- School Councils should consult with parents of students enrolled in the school about matters under consideration

Regulations Governing School Councils - School Council Membership

School Councils shall consist of:

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

- **Parents**

- parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the school
- Parent members form the majority
- A board employee **working at the same** school as the child attends *is not* eligible to serve as a parent member on the council
- A board employee **working at another school**, is eligible to serve as a parent member on the council of the school the child attends (they must pre-declare their employment)
- A Board employee **cannot** serve as a chair / co-chair of the council
- School Board Trustees are **not eligible** to be council members

- **Teachers**

- A Board employee can be a teaching / non-teaching council member
- Any teacher in the school is eligible to seek election for the teacher position
- Is to be elected by other teachers in the school
- The position cannot be filled by a principal or vice-principal

Non-teaching Staff

- Any non-teaching staff in the school is eligible
- Is to be elected by other non-teaching staff members in school
- Staff member employed at the school who does not have teaching duties (e.g. secretary, an educational assistant, librarian, custodial staff, lunchtime or hallway monitor, ECE)
- Parents who are non-teaching staff are considered non-teaching staff representative

Community Representative(s)

- Must appoint at least one community representative
- Cannot be an employed at the same school
- If employed by the board, must pre-declare their employment

School Council – Membership Requirements...con't

Student Representative(s) – Secondary Schools

- Should be enrolled in the school
- Can join committee work of a school council

Student Representative(s) – Elementary Schools

- Principal must consult school council if council wants a student
- If agreed by the school council, principal can appoint the student (principal may consider student advice on the appointment of a student)

In School with at least one secondary grade:

- There should be at least one student member
- Must be appointed by the student council, or
- Where there is no student council, student is elected by the student body

Regulations Governing School Councils

Election & Term of Office

- Elections to be held annually, within the first thirty calendar days of the start of the school year
- The regulation stipulates that the term of office to a school council will be a one-year term

Remuneration

- School council members will not be paid for their work on a school council

Incorporation

- School councils cannot be incorporated (Reg. 612/00)
- School councils are advisory groups to their principals and/or the school board

Constitution & By-laws

- School councils are not required to develop lengthy constitutions, since Ontario Regulation 612/00 sets out the mandate and roles and responsibilities for school councils
- The regulation requires councils to develop by-laws to address the following areas:
 - election procedures
 - filling vacancies
 - conflict of interest
 - conflict resolution procedures

Fundraising

- Fundraising activities may be conducted in accordance **with board policies and guidelines** and the funds raised are to be used for a purpose approved by the board
- **Any funds raised by the school council** (and any assets purchased with those funds) **belong, legally, to the board**

Meetings

- A school council shall **meet at least four times** during the school year
- A school council shall **meet within the first 35 days of the school year**, after the elections are held
- A meeting of a school council cannot be held unless:
 - A majority of the current members of the council are present at the meeting; and
 - A majority of the members present are parent members
- All school council meetings shall be **open to the public**
- Meetings shall be held at a **location accessible to the public**

Roles played by the Principal

Acting as an important source of information

- The **principal is the key source** of information for the school council
- The principal is a **link** between school council and Ministry, Board and School

Receiving and responding to school council recommendations

- Receiver of recommendations made by the council (e.g. special events, school policies regards field trips)
- Although the **principal is the ultimate “decider”**, he/she still has to report back to the council with the results of the recommendation

Roles played by the Principal... cont'd

Attending school council meetings

- The principal is required to attend and participate in every school council meeting
- Powers or duties can be delegated to the vice-principal

Ensuring that the school council is in place

- The school council works with the principal on many significant areas, and hence it's important that the school council is in-place early on in the year
- School council elections must be held within thirty days of the start of the school year (even if by acclimation)
- Elections must be held by secret ballot

Distribution of information

- Notify the school community the logistics of the elections, at least 14 days in advance
- The **election results within 30 days** of the election
- Make documents relating to the council's proceedings available for a minimum of four years (**including minutes and financial statements**)

Working together

Consultation

- Boards consult with school councils on a variety of topics
- Consultations could be via surveys, presentations, town hall meetings, focus groups, Ward Forums, etc.

Report Back

- Boards report back to councils about the outcome of the recommendations made by councils
- Report backs could be via letter to the council co/chair, presentation at council meetings or through the principal

School Statement of Needs (SSoN)

- Every year, school councils should complete the SSON (principals profile) to help the board select a principal at the school, **should the need arise**

Effective School Councils

- **New school council members** may get elected / appointed each year
- Give new members the opportunity to get acquainted with their roles and responsibilities and become effective council members
- Prepare an annual report of council activities
- Consider developing an orientation package, which includes:
 - School Councils: A Guide for members
 - Ontario Regulations 612/00 and 298
 - Information about the school, board and Ontario Ministry of Education
 - School Council's by-laws
 - School Council's Code of Ethics
 - School Profile
- **On-going training and mentoring** for members

The Chair / Co-Chairs

- Are elected by the council members and must be a parent
- **Must not be employed by the school board**
- Is a voting member
- Duties may include:
 - arrange for meetings
 - prepare agendas
 - chair council meetings
 - ensure that minutes & financial statements of council meetings are recorded and maintained
 - facilitate the resolution of conflict
 - participate as ex-officio members of all committees established by the school council
 - communicate with the school principal on behalf of the council

Parent Representatives

- They are voting members
- Can participate on any committees established by the school council
- Contribute to the discussions of the school council
- Solicit the views of other parents and members of the community to share with the school council
- Observe the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

School Principal

- Must be a member of the school council,
- Principal, or delegated vice-principal, must attend school council meeting
- **Is not a voting member** of the council
- Provides the council with communication received from the Ministry
- Provides the council details about laws, regulations, and board policies
- Takes recommendations made by the school council and reports back on the action taken in response to the recommendation
- Solicits council members' views on matters relating to school policies, student achievement and well-being and accountability of the education system to parents
- May participate on any committees established by the school council

Student Representative(s)

- Is a voting member
- Contributes to the discussions of the school council
- Solicits the views of other students to share with the school council
- May participate on any committees established by the school council
- Communicates information from the council to other students
- Observes the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

Staff Representative(s)

- One each from the teaching and non-teaching staff
- **Are voting members**
- Contribute to the discussions of the school council
- Solicit views from their staff groups to share with the school council
- May participate on any committees established by the school council
- Communicate information back to their staff groups
- Observe the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

Community Representative(s)

- **Is a voting member**
- Contributes to the discussions of the school council
- Represents the community's perspective
- May participate on any committees established by the school council
- Acts as a bridge between the school and the community
- Observes the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

Representative of Home and School Association

- Is a representative of Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations
- **Is a voting member**
- Contributes to the discussions of the school council
- Acts as a bridge between the school and his / her association
- May participate on any committees established by the school council
- Observes the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

Legal Liability and Insurance

- School councils should refrain from engaging in activities beyond their assigned duties, such as:
 - Providing after school care
 - Running music programs
- For other activities, the Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE) provides insurance to school board & councils (at a cost). www.osbie.on.ca

School Council Funding

School Council budget

- Every September each school gets funds under the budget line **GL41500**, to support the running of the School Council
- The amount is calculated @ \$1.25 per every FTE (min. \$300 & max. \$1000)
- The Principal and the school council chair should determine how to spend the funds (e.g. snacks, photocopying, child-care)

Grant for Student Needs (GSN): Parent Engagement grant

- Every February / March each school is allocated a Grant for Student Needs (GSN)
- The \$500 GSN grant is to be spent by the school council on Parent Engagement initiatives

Parent Reaching Out Grant (PRO Grant)

- The School Council needs to apply for this grant every year to the Ministry of Education
- The max. amount is \$1000
- The Grant is intended for Parent Engagement not Student development (for details refer to the Min. of Education website, http://education.factorial.ca/s_Login.jsp)
- Could be spent on event such as, bringing in speakers to the school, activities to increase parent engagement

School Council Fundraising

“TDSB recognizes that school-based fundraising is a local activity”

- TDSB has developed a Fundraising Policy with extensive input from school councils, student councils and ward councils
- Fundraising activities may include sponsorships and donations
- Money raised through fundraising cannot be used directly or indirectly for the delivery of curriculum or a safe learning environment, i.e. structural repair, sanitation, emergency repair, textbooks, school administration, staff positions covered under collective agreements.
- TDSB Fundraising Hotline at 416.397.3510
- <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/HowtoGetInvolved/Fundraising.aspx>

School Council Fundraising...cont'd

Fundraising and Finance

- School councils should preferably have a separate Fundraising Committee
- Meet and plan separately after first School Council meeting
- Present the fundraising plans at the School Council meeting for approval

Who decides how to spend the money?

- Allocation and expenditure should happen at a school council meeting, with support of council members AND the parent community

Role of the principal in Fundraising

- During development of a fundraising plan:
 - provide staff wish list, and indicate priority
- Allocation of funds is a collective decision where the school council and principal prioritize the plans – Fundraising activities/initiatives, must be pre-approved by the Principal

School Council Fundraising...cont'd

Where to use funds

- To enhance programs and experiences of the students within the school
e.g. scientist-in-the school, subsidizing school trips
- Support specific school initiatives (e.g. book bags for reading buddy program, Smart Boards, etc.)

Where not to use

- Textbooks, teacher wages
- Complete maintenance on the school property
- Any project that is covered by the Ministry's educational funding
- Covered through collective agreements of the Board
- Donations to political groups

Reporting

- Every school council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of the school and to the Board that established the council

Important web sites

Parent Engagement Policy:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/policy.html>

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE_Policy2010.pdf

School Councils: A Guide for Members:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>

Education Act R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 298 Operational of Schools - General

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900298_e.htm

Ontario Regulation 613/00 made under the Education Act

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2000/elaws_src_regs_r00613_e.htm

Education Act Ontario Regulation 612/00 School Councils And Parent Involvement Committees

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_000612_e.htm

Parents Reaching Out Grants (PRO Grants)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html>

School Council SC411

Who are they?

- Team members have received intensive training in school council operations and strategies to build successful school councils. The team has received specific training on Education Act –Ontario regulation 612/00 governing school councils.
- Team members are PARENTS with children in TDSB schools. Each member is active in their respective school communities and network with parents from across the Board to discover best solutions and practices for school councils.

Why contact them?

- Address questions regarding school council regulations and operations
- Share information on best practices to support and or improve school council operations

How to reach them?

Call SC411 at 416-397-3529, or 416-395-5040,

Email: info@torontopiac.com



Questions