

# GOVERNING BOARDS

L'ASSOCIATION PROVINCIALE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS DU QUÉBEC



## A FEW REMINDERS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

Below are answers to some of the questions most frequently asked regarding the constitution and operation of governing boards, along with some suggestions which should help to get this new school year off to a good start. In the case of vocational and adult education, we have provided certain qualifications to the general response.

### 1. IS IT POSSIBLE TO HOLD A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD IN SEPTEMBER EVEN THOUGH ELECTIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN HELD?

Yes, since the mandate of voting members of the board continues until a new election is held in September or until a new nomination. *However, given all the changes that attend the beginning of any new school year, it might be a good idea to wait till a new governing board is formed before taking any important decisions.*

In the vocational and adult education sectors, there is no legal obligation to hold elections in September. *Nevertheless, the earlier in the school year, the better it is to hold elections.*

### 2. WHO DETERMINES THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO SIT ON THE GOVERNING BOARD?

The school board, following consultation, determines the number of representatives to the governing board. The total number of positions for the representatives of staff (including the child-care representative) must be **equal** to the number of positions for the representatives of parents.

In the vocational and adult education sectors, the total number of posts for the members of staff may not exceed the total number of positions for the representatives of other groups.

**Suggestion:** *There is nothing to prevent governing boards or members of staff from making a formal request that the school board review the representation on the governing board, preferably before the annual elections are held. The important thing is that the principle of parity be respected.*

### 3. A) WHAT HAPPENS IF DURING THE COURSE OF THE SCHOOL YEAR A VACANCY OCCURS ON THE GOVERNING BOARD AS THE RESULT OF THE RESIGNATION OF A PARENT?

The vacant seat is filled by a parent **named by the other parents** sitting on the governing board. A position filled in this manner is for a duration equivalent to the remainder of the mandate of the parent who resigned. Note that the parent of a child who is no longer enrolled in the school remains in office until a general meeting to elect new parents is held in September.

### B) WHAT HAPPENS IF, DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR, A VACANCY OCCURS ON THE GOVERNING BOARD AS THE RESULT OF THE RESIGNATION OF A TEACHER?

Normally, the vacancy is filled by a teacher elected by his or her peers.

### 4. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF THE GOVERNING BOARD?

The chair (a parent who is not an employee of the school board) is elected by all members of the governing board.

In the vocational and adult education sectors, the chair is chosen from among the members other than the staff and students.

The function of the chair is to preside over the meetings of the governing board and to ensure that the procedural rules (adopted by the governing board) are respected. In the event of a tie vote, the chair's vote is preponderant. In other words, the chair has the right to veto. This is the formal role of the chair as defined in the Education Act. **All other mandates given to the chair of the governing board must be voted on by all of its members.** Any initiatives taken by the chair must have the prior approval of the members of the board.

A good chair encourages discussion and the exchange of ideas, invites decisions by consensus, and ensures that debate respects the mandate of the governing board.

**Suggestion:** *To reduce the possibility of any misunderstandings, some governing boards have taken the initiative to define the role of the chair in the board's rules of procedure. These rules should be determined and reviewed at the beginning of each year by the board.*

## 5. WHAT IS THE QUORUM NECESSARY FOR A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD?

The quorum is the majority of the members currently in office, including at least half of the parent representatives.

For example, if your governing board consists of **14 members** as follows:

6 parents + 4 teachers + 1 caretaker + 1 child-care worker + 2 community representatives, then the quorum is 8 members (majority = 7+1), of whom 3 must be parents.

In the vocational and adult education sectors, the quorum is the majority of members currently in office.

We suggest that governing boards establish at their first meeting an action plan for the coming year, including the matters to be dealt with and a timeline for dealing with them. Boards that have adopted such a policy report that this has provided a common agreement on the year's priorities.

The information booklet "What You Need to Know About Governing Boards" will be distributed in all schools and centres throughout the month of October.

### References in the Education Act:

- Continuity of responsibility: Articles 54, 102
- Determination of number of representatives: Articles 43, 103
- Vacancies on the governing board and loss of qualification: Articles 55, 102
- Role of the chair: Articles 59, 63, 107
- Quorum: Article 61

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact your local union or Nancy Champagne at QPAT: (514) 694-9777 or 1-800-361-9870

**Best wishes for every success in this new school year.**