

TOPIC: SCHOOL COUNCIL

WHY?

The School Council is your best contractual opportunity to be involved in the formation, modification and implementation of the educational policies in your school. The School Council is a consultative body that opens and develops dialogue with the school administration. It is the one place where teachers control the discussion with their administration and where their viewpoints must be listened to.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNCIL AND A STAFF MEETING?

School Council Meetings

- *run by a teacher (chairperson)
- *have powers to make decisions (pass motions)
- *get direct answers, proof, explanations
- *meetings dates decided by council
(suggest a minimum of once per month
although some schools are every 2-3 weeks)
- *emergency meetings may be called
- *compensation for time by reducing personal presence

Staff Meetings

- *run by the administration
- *information purposes only
- *no major decisions should be made here
- *usually held once a month

WHO MAKES UP THE SCHOOL COUNCIL?

The council should have a minimum of 3 members to a maximum of 10 members. Ideally every dept. or cycle should be represented. These reps. serve the dept. or cycle and vote on behalf of their members. The consultation process is imperative.

In each school the principal (or designate), the union delegate (or alternate) and other elected members shall form the School Council. The Council should be composed no later than September 15 of the calendar year. The best run schools are ones where there is an open dialogue between staff and administration. The School Council is set to respect the opinions of each other and is meant to better the school for everyone concerned. Council should be free of cliques/dissension and individuals who wish to push their own agendas.

WHAT TOPICS ARE COVERED AT THE SCHOOL COUNCIL?

The School Council must be consulted on any decisions of a pedagogical or disciplinary nature coming from the Taxe scolaire, MELS, Comité de gestion etc.. The School Council must be consulted on any decision that would modify the pedagogical or disciplinary nature of the school. In addition the following topics require consultation with the School Council: Professional Days (plans), Student Activities, Educational Objectives, Distribution of duties and responsibilities of teachers, School Organization Plan, Value Added (if there is no sub- committee formed), Placement of floating ped. days (Calendar) etc. A complete list of items is found in the Local (4-2.03). A standing item on School Council is the school budget. The first budget must be presented at the first October meeting. (Local 4-2.04 a)

HOW DOES COUNCIL OPERATE?

Once the council is elected, amongst the elected members it is time to elect (select) a chairperson and a secretary.

Chairperson duties include

- *prepare and post an agenda
- *call the meeting to order and maintain order
- *handle the motions (most items should be in the form of motions)
- *determine the internal procedures of the Council
i.e. Does the chairperson vote? (only to break a tie vote?)

Secretary duties include

- *take minutes of the meeting
- *distribute the minutes of the meeting to members of the Council (the minutes do not require the approval of the Principal)
- *ensure the minutes are posted (sent) to all members on staff

Voting - The Council will vote on receipt of items (budget), approval of previous meeting minutes, and motions. The principal (or designate) is a member of Council and thus has the right to vote. Once motions are presented, members can speak in favour or against a motion but when voting the member is representing their cycle, team or department. A simple majority is required for a motion to pass. The vote of the chairperson should break a tie vote. If a motion by Council is not implemented, the administration shall explain in writing to the staff the reasons for the decision taken. (Local 4-2.07). If an expert opinion or resource person is required, then the chairperson should invite the person to attend the meeting and recognize their attendance.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Ensure teachers are united on the School Council. Be careful of those who thrive on the "divide and conquer" technique. The recommendations of School Council should be taken to the Governing Board. It is always a good idea that at least one member of School Council sit on Governing Board. If your School Council requires help in organization or implementation please contact the WQTA for assistance. The WQTA can assist you in setting up agendas for meetings, if required.

Finally many thanks to the MTA and PTU for access to their resources in preparing this document.