

Applewood Public School School Council Handbook



2024-2025 School Year

INTRODUCTION

Family involvement is one of the most significant factors contributing to student's success in school. School councils provide a valuable forum through which parents, guardians and other members of the school community can contribute to improving student achievement and well-being. The role of the School Council is advisory in nature and is focused on forging an alliance between parents, guardians and the community to enhance the input provided to the school on issues, thereby allowing the school to respond to its community. When parents and guardians are positively involved in their children's education, the level of student achievement increases, students attend school more regularly and they demonstrate a more positive attitude toward school. They are also more likely to complete high school (Ontario Ministry of Education: School Councils, A Guide for Members, revised 2002, page 13).

This Handbook was created for Applewood Public School's School Council to establish by-laws and provide parameters for the operation of the Council, within what is feasible. This Handbook is based upon the Policies and Regulations established by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, as well as DSBN Policies; specifically Ontario Regulation 612/00, Ontario Regulation 613/00, and Ontario Regulation 298 in addition to DSBN Policy A-12: School Councils, B-03: Financial Accountability of School Generated Funds and G-19: Fundraising/Canvassing Initiated by School.

School Councils play a valuable role as an advisory body and can help support schools by aligning their activities to complement key components of high-performing schools:

- **Instructional Programs** (literacy nights, math nights, supporting the arts, etc.)
- **Welcoming Learning Environments that are Student-Focused** (ie. guest speakers, playgrounds, etc.)
- **Effective/Efficient Operation Systems** (Kiss n Ride, Council structures, fundraising, etc)
- **Strong Parent Community Relationships** (social events, meet the teacher nights, volunteer recruitment, etc.)

It is worth noting that this Handbook is a guideline, and *not a requirement*, as there are always mitigating factors to be considered when working with a school and school community. Any concerns or questions should be addressed with the Principal so that any misconceptions can be addressed and a mutually agreeable resolution can be obtained.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COUNCIL:

1. The Composition of the School Council Executive:

- a. Is to include: a Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.
- b. Additional General Members-at-Large are welcome but not required in order to form a Council.
- c. Should there not be enough parental involvement to compose an entire Executive, the role of Chair shall be the only required permanent position.
- d. Members of the Executive roles must be parents or legal guardians of students currently attending the school

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Council Members:

a. Council Members shall:

- i. Make recommendations on behalf of the school community
- ii. Place the overall interests of the school and students first
- iii. Maintain a school-wide perspective on all issues
- iv. Participate in council meetings
- v. Act as a link between the Council and the school community
- vi. Encourage participation of the school community
- vii. Participate in training and information sessions as necessary
- viii. Seek to reach consensus
- ix. Follow the expectations as set out in policies and regulations
- x. Ensure a positive and collaborative demeanour that does not disparage the school or school community

b. The Chair of the Council shall:

- i. Schedule regular meetings
- ii. Ensure that agendas are prepared
- iii. Chair/run the meetings based upon the agenda
- iv. Communicate with the Principal, co-chair and council members
- v. Ensure that there is regular communication with the school community
- vi. Facilitate collaborative decision-making
- vii. Share all correspondence with the necessary Council members
- viii. In the absence of the Chair and Co-Chair, the principal shall chair the meetings

c. The Co-Chair of the Council shall:

- i. Assist the Chair in all responsibilities of the Chair
- ii. Chair/run meetings in the absence of the Chair

d. The Secretary of the Council shall:

- i. Record minutes of all meetings, including attendance
- ii. Submit the minutes to the Principal and Chair within two weeks of each meeting for review and distribution
- iii. In lieu of a permanent Secretary, the Council may agree to rotate the position amongst members

e. The Treasurer of the Council shall:

- i. In consultation with the School Administrative Assistant and Principal, review and share an accurate record of all Council finances in a report at meetings
- ii. Report to the Chair and Principal any concerns or irregularities in the Council's finances
- iii. Comply with DSBN regulations for the handling of Council finances

f. Sub-Committees:

- i. The Council may create sub-committees that they deem necessary to facilitate the objectives of the Council
- ii. Each committee shall consist of a co-ordinator (from the Executive Members of the Council) and any interested parents/legal guardians
- iii. The committees are an extension of the Council and subject to the same guidelines and accountability as the Council
- iv. Progress reports are to be shared at each Council meeting

3. Election Process for Members:

- a. The Principal, in collaboration with the Council, shall encourage parents and legal guardians on an ongoing basis to consider involvement in the Council through their usual means of communication (ie. monthly newsletters, etc.)
- b. Parents and legal guardians will be notified, in advance of the first meeting, of the positions available for Council.
- c. A deadline shall be set, for the submission of declarations for Executive positions, that occurs prior to the first meeting of each school year.
- d. Executive positions may only be filled by parents and legal guardians of students in attendance at Applewood in the current school year.
- e. If there are a sufficient number of nominees to fill the positions outlined, a vote will be held at the initial council meeting to determine who will fill the positions for the school year.
- f. If there is an insufficient number of nominees, positions will be acclaimed where available and left vacant where necessary.

- g. All members who have declared themselves as desiring a position on Executive shall be affirmed as general members of the Council should they not win the seat for which they were nominated.
- h. Votes shall be tallied by the Principal and a school representative (staff member).
- i. The names of the elected Executive Council members shall be communicated to the community using the regular means of communication that occurs immediately post-election (ie. monthly newsletter)

4. Meetings:

- a. There will be a minimum of FOUR (4) meetings held per school year, with the option of additional meetings to be approved by the Principal.
- b. Meetings are open to all parents, legal guardians, staff and community members
- c. Agendas and minutes of the meeting shall be provided to all Executive Council members 3 days in advance of the meeting date and be available to meeting attendees at the time of the meeting.
- d. The duration of the meeting shall be no longer than 90 minutes. After 90 minutes, the Executive Council, through a vote, must decide whether to extend the meeting by up to 30 minutes or to table remaining items for the next scheduled meeting.

5. Decision Making:

An effort is to be made by the Council to reach a consensus on recommendations to the Principal. If consensus cannot be reached, a voting motion can be made. The motion must be seconded with an opportunity to discuss and a simple vote (yay/nay) will be carried. Each member of the Executive Council is entitled to one vote. The Principal is not entitled to a vote and therefore is who tallies the votes. In the event of a tie, the Chair breaks the tie.

If a member of Executive Council may gain, either directly or indirectly, a financial benefit from a decision made by the Council, that member shall declare a conflict of interest and abstain from providing input, counsel or voting on that topic.

Although not mandatory, the best practice is to vote on items that carry a fiscal responsibility so that it is reflected in the minutes. When not feasible, the Principal must ensure that the approval is given in writing by the Chair.

Considerations for planning through an anti-oppressive and inclusive lens:

- Who does this event/activity/experience include? Who does it exclude?

- How will this event/activity/experience support students' and their families' sense of belonging in our school community?
- Does this event/activity/experience pose a barrier for students and/or families?
- Does this event/activity/experience have a 'low entry point' so everyone can participate?
- Have you thought about the diversity of your facilitators/speakers/topics?
- Have you considered the identities of your students and their families?
- Have you considered the timing of the event/activity/experience and will it be a barrier to participation?
- Does the event/activity/experience conflict with a day or time of religious or spiritual significance, observation or statutory holiday?

6. Conflict Resolution:

The following is a four-step approach to resolving internal conflict and other such matters:

- Acknowledge the Conflict- as a group, acknowledge when a conflict arises and determine the source of the conflict. For example, is it related to facts? Goals? Processes? Values? Opinion? Preference? Beliefs? Communication?
- Plan how to deal with the conflict- Once the source of the conflict is defined, decide how to deal with it. This may be done by the Chair, another individual on the Executive Council or the entire Council. In difficult situations, it is best to engage a person who has no association with the Council to facilitate discussion and problem-solving- this person is not the Principal. At this stage, all Council members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their concerns and viewpoints.
- Provide time for discussion- The Chair or whoever is facilitating the discussion should introduce the problem and ask each member for input so that the nature and source of the conflict are clear. Acknowledging each person by listening to understand sets the tone for problem-solving and opens the Council to a variety of solutions. Emotions should be accepted and dealt with since they are part of conflict.
- Seek the best solution- As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time. Following the discussion, the person facilitating the discussion may use a process for building consensus to arrive at a new solution. Depending on the nature of the conflict, it is sometimes best for council members to have time to reflect on the proposed solution and the decision to be finalized at the next meeting.
- Once a solution has been determined, Executive Council members will be asked the following questions:
 - Can you live with this solution?

- Will you support the solution?
- Does this solution address your initial hesitations?

7. Communication:

- a. Minutes of the meeting will be made available to all Executive Council members three days in advance of the next meeting, providing adequate time for review
- b. Minutes of the meeting must be submitted to the Principal within two weeks of the meeting
- c. Agendas and minutes from the current school year are available to the general school community as requested.