SCHOOL COUNCILS

Beliefs

School councils are vital to the success of schools.

Guidelines

1. The Principal is the educational leader of the school and is responsible to seek support and advice from the community through the School Council.

2. Students, parents and members of the school community should have meaningful involvement in the educational decision making process through school councils.

3. All participants in a school council should work cooperatively and collaboratively together.

4. The purpose of a School Council is to:
   4.1 Advise the Principal and the Superintendent respecting any matter relating to the school or division;
   4.2 Perform any duty or function delegated to it by the Superintendent in accordance with the conditions of the delegation;
   4.3 Consult with the Principal so that the Principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
   4.4 Consult with the Principal so that the Principal may ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the Superintendent;
   4.5 Make by-laws governing its meetings and the conduct of its affairs;
   4.6 Subject to Alberta Education regulations, make and implement policies necessary to carry out its functions; and
   4.7 Do anything it is authorized under the Alberta Education regulations to do.

5. School Councils must ensure that school policies promote the fairness and egalitarian principles of public schools and not adversely affect other public schools in the division.

6. School Councils are accountable to represent the views of the majority of parents and community and must guard against the possibility of minority or special interest views being promoted as a reflection of greater community views.

7. School Councils are encouraged to provide advice in the development of:
   7.1 Mission, vision, values and philosophy;
   7.2 Policies and administrative procedures;
   7.3 Annual strategic education plans
   7.4 Annual results reports
   7.5 Budgets
7.6 Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular programs by sharing their knowledge, expertise and skills with students and staff;

7.7 School climate and rules;

7.8 Services in the community to enhance student learning through:
   7.8.1 Use of community resources (speakers, materials, sites for visits or partnerships),
   7.8.2 Counseling,
   7.8.3 Enhancement of programs, or
   7.8.4 Specialized services;

7.9 The meaning of student achievement, satisfaction survey and other school quality indicator results, and the presenting of such results to the public;

7.10 Priorities for the improvement and use of school facilities and equipment and offering suggestions for fees;

7.11 Priorities for educational programs within the context of the division’s mission and mandate and meeting the minimum requirements of Alberta Education;

7.12 Suggestions on division and school budget priorities, expenditure allocations, instructional fees and other fees;

7.13 Student fund-raising activities that would be acceptable to the community and making those recommendations to the appropriate fund raising entities that exist within the school framework;

7.14 Recommendations relative to the local selection of learning materials;

7.15 Volunteer resources for activities in support of schools; and

7.16 Activities promoting and enhancing the good of the school or division.

8. School Councils are encouraged to consult with the Principal to ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister. To operationalize this right the following shall apply:

8.1 The Principal solicits input from the School Council regarding ways to improve education at the school level;

8.2 The Principal provides the School Council a general summary of data reflecting school performance on:
   8.2.1 Achievement test results
   8.2.2 Diploma examination results
   8.2.3 Accountability Pillar results
   8.2.4 Other school quality indicators

8.3 The Principal ensures that the general summary is explained and clarified to reduce the possibility of misinterpretation or inaccurate conclusions being drawn.

8.4 The Principal makes available to the Superintendent a written report containing recommendations and feedback regarding any community concerns respecting the results.

9. The School Council is encouraged to consult with the Principal to ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the Superintendent. To operationalize this right, the following shall apply:

9.1 The Principal provides the School Council with periodic financial statements on a schedule of dates agreed to by the Principal and the School Council;

9.2 The financial statement includes data on school governed accounts; and

9.3 The Principal ensures that all financial statements are made in accordance with any requirements imposed by the Superintendent.
10. The Superintendent may delegate to School Councils, from time to time, certain responsibilities or duties. The School Council may perform any duty or function delegated to it by the Superintendent. When delegation occurs the Superintendent will specify:
   10.1 The type of authority being delegated;
   10.2 The financial limits involved; and
   10.3 The time period for which the delegation is in effect.

11. The formation, structure, and operating procedures of a School Council will be as determined by its membership, governed by the School Act and Alberta Education regulations. Advice, assistance, and guidelines are available in the *Alberta School Council Resource Guide* available from each Principal.

12. Effective communication between the division and School Councils is essential to bring critical perspectives about education, school needs and community concerns to the division.
   12.1 The division provides opportunities for dialogue with School Councils through meetings between the Board and School Council representatives.
   12.2 The division initiates at minimum four meetings annually with school council representatives through meetings with the Council of School Councils.
   12.3 The schedule for these meetings shall be determined by the Council of School Councils and at the Board’s organizational meeting.
   12.4 School Councils are notified of the meeting schedule.
   12.5 School Councils are informed of the agenda items that the division wishes to discuss and School Councils shall submit their agenda items to the Council of School Councils Chair.
   12.6 The Council of School Councils Chair, in consultation with the Superintendent, prepares and circulates the agenda to the Board and School Councils.
   12.7 Following the meeting the Council of School Councils Chair or Superintendent ensures that an accurate summary of the discussion is provided to the Division and School Council chairs.

Procedures

13. Individual School Councils may require a formal route to inform the Board of a concern on specific matters.
   13.1 School Councils shall determine whether an issue can be resolved within the administrative structure or must, in their opinion, be discussed with the Board. Every effort must be made to resolve the issue within the administrative structure.
   13.2 The communication channel to be followed in resolving an issue or communicating concerns within the administrative structure shall be School Council to Principal, Principal to Superintendent and Superintendent to Board.
   13.3 If, after following the administrative process outlined in 13.2 above, the School Council decides that an appearance before the Board is necessary the School Council Chair shall request in writing, a time at which to appear before a scheduled meeting of the Board, and provide an outline of the issue or concern to be discussed.
   13.4 The School Council request shall be included on the agenda of a regularly scheduled meeting and the School Council Chair and Principal will be invited to make a presentation to the Board.
13.5 The Board will hear the presentation, may ask questions for clarification, and may reserve its decision until the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

13.6 In exceptional circumstances, the Board may alter the process outlined in 13 above.

14. In the event that a dispute or conflict arises between a Principal and a School Council, every attempt shall be made to resolve it locally. If, after consultation with the Superintendent or designate, the dispute/conflict cannot be resolved locally, either the School Council Chair or Principal may submit a written appeal to the Board, within a reasonable time from which the dispute/conflict arose.

14.1 When the need to hear an appeal arises, the Board or a committee established by the Board to hear the appeal, shall establish a hearing date, time and place which allows the parties to the appeal sufficient notice to prepare for the appeal. This may include arranging to be represented by legal counsel.

14.2 The appeal shall be heard by the Board or a committee established by the Board. The Superintendent or designates may be present to assist the Board or committee, except in cases where it is their decision that is being appealed. In that circumstance, they shall attend to make representation to support their position.

14.3 The Board Chair or Committee Chair to hear the appeal shall be guided by the following:

14.3.1 Introduce the participants to the hearing
14.3.2 Explain the purposes of the appeal hearing.
14.3.3 Provide an opportunity for both parties to make representations surrounding the disputed issues, and in support of their position before a decision on the appeal is made.
14.3.4 Permit each party to hear the other party and to respond to statements as presented by the other party.
14.3.5 Allow trustees to know the facts and disputed issues, and to hear any evidence or information they deem relevant prior to making the decision in respect of the appeal.
14.3.6 The School Council Chair and the Principal will be given an opportunity to review their positions regarding the dispute on the policy proposed, or adopted for the school, and the issues surrounding the dispute.
14.3.7 The party making application for the appeal shall proceed first and be given a full and ample opportunity to raise concerns before the Board. The other party shall then be given ample opportunity to explain the party’s position to the Board regarding the disputed matter.
14.3.8 In the event that the Superintendent has been asked by the parties to the appeal to give a decision with respect to the disputed matter, the Superintendent shall be entitled to make representations to the Board regarding his findings and his recommendation for resolution of the dispute.
14.3.9 Each party to the dispute shall be given ample opportunity to respond both to the concerns raised by themselves with respect to the dispute, and the Superintendent’s proposed resolution of the dispute.
14.3.10 Board members may question the parties to clarify the facts.
14.3.11 The Board or committee established by the Board will discuss the matter in the absence of the parties and executive staff.

14.3.12 The Board or committee established by the Board will make a decision in respect of the appeal and advise the parties in writing regarding the decision and the reasons for that decision.

14.3.13 The decision of the Board or committee shall be final.

15. Each School Council is encouraged to have a written procedural appeal mechanism or a conflict resolution process for resolving disputes among School Council members, between the School Council and the wider community, and between the School Council and the school staff.

16. Where internal School Council conflict exists, the Superintendent shall provide for third party mediation at the request of a School Council provided both parties to the dispute are in agreement.

17. Each School Council is encouraged to have a written procedural mechanism for removing a member from School Council; an example of such a mechanism is outlined in 27 below.

18. The School Council must prepare and file a report with the school by September 30 that summarizes their activities in the previous school year and includes a financial statement related to money handled by the School Council and how it was used.

19. The Division will provide School Councils with access to policies and administrative procedures, regular Board meeting minutes and other relevant data to facilitate good communication.

20. The Superintendent encourages School Councils to contribute, through the Principal, to newsletters and other school communication publications by submitting articles outlining:
   20.1 Significant accomplishments at the school;
   20.2 Major events or projects at the school; and
   20.3 Results of studies undertaken.

21. The Board may request the Minister to dissolve a School Council if the Board is of the opinion that one of the following negative conditions prevails:
   21.1 Internal dissension affecting morale;
   21.2 Adversarial relationships with staff;
   21.3 Refusal to follow the policies and/or administrative procedures of the Board or to carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the School Act and Alberta Education Regulations;
   21.4 Disruption of the educational climate;
   21.5 Unresolved disputes between the School Council and the Principal; or,
   21.6 Any fraudulent, criminal or unethical behavior.

22. In the event that a School Council is dissolved, suspended, or if establishment is unsuccessful in accordance with Alberta Education regulations, the Superintendent requires the Principal to take all reasonable steps to establish an Parent Advisory Committee for the school.
23. A Parent Advisory Committee may carry out one or more of the duties or functions of a school council.

24. Membership of the Parent Advisory Committee shall include:
   24.1 Parents of students who attend the school
   24.2 At least one teacher from the school, elected by other teachers in the school
   24.3 The Principal

25. The Principal, in consultation with the Parent Advisory Committee, shall establish:
   25.1 Meeting dates and locations;
   25.2 Meeting procedures; and
   25.3 Officers.

26. Each school term, the Principal shall advise the Superintendent of the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the School Council and/or Parent Advisory Committee executive.

27. If it becomes obvious to the School Council that a person or persons continue to generate significant conflict that cannot be resolved, then the School Council may wish to invoke their removal bylaw. Sample Removal Bylaw:
   27.1 The School Council may by Special Resolution remove any member providing that the member has been notified twenty-one days in advance and is afforded the opportunity to be heard at the meeting.
   27.2 Special Resolution means a resolution of the School Council passed at a School Council meeting by a majority of at least 2/3 of the members present at that meeting.
   27.3 Grounds for removal could include but not be limited to the following:
      27.3.1 Creating internal dissension affecting morale
      27.3.2 Adversarial relationships with staff
      27.3.3 Refusal to follow the policies or procedures of the division or to carry out responsibilities in accordance with the School Act and Alberta Education Regulations
      27.3.4 Disruption of the educational climate
      27.3.5 Any fraudulent, criminal or unethical behavior.

29. No School Council shall incorporate under the Societies Act or Part 9 of the Companies Act.

30. If school councils use, or facilitate the use of social media, it must be to contribute to a positive, supportive and professional learning environment within the school and Division, and as a tool to build and enhance the reputation of the school or Division.

Reference: Section 20, 22, 60, 61, School Act
School Councils Regulation 113/2007 (Current as of September 1, 2018)
Policy 1.8.2: School-Based Decision Making
Alberta School Councils Resources Manual