

Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members

School Council Chair

It is expected that the school council chairperson will be a parent of a student attending the school. The chair should be someone who can work collaboratively and knows how to organize both programs and people. The chair should actively encourage others to become involved in meaningful ways. Typical chairing duties include:

- calling regular school council meetings
- preparing agendas for school council meetings
- chairing and maintaining meeting decorum
- ensuring that minutes are recorded and maintained
- communicating with the principal on a regular basis
- ensuring there is regular communication with the school community, beyond those who attend meetings
- following existing school council by-laws/operating procedures
- ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- soliciting input from all members
- staying informed about school board policy that impacts school council
- striving to ensure the diversity of the school community is represented on school council
- promoting teamwork between the school council, principal and staff
- leading a school council self-evaluation (e.g., completing the annual report to the school board).

Vice-chair

On some school councils, the role of chair is shared, either through the creation of co-chairing positions or through the chair's dependence on the vice-chair to undertake part of the work. Typically, the vice-chair's duties are to:

- chair meetings, in the event the chair is unavailable
- work with and support the chair in agenda preparation
- promote teamwork and assist the chair in the smooth running of the meetings
- keep informed of relevant school and school board policies
- prepare to assume the responsibility of chairperson in the future.

Secretary

The school council secretary typically will:

- act as a recorder at each meeting and ensure the minutes accurately
- reflect the directions agreed to at the school council meeting
- keep minutes, correspondence, records and other school council documents (e.g., constitution and operating procedures) filed in an orderly fashion and publicly accessible, in accordance with the
- *Personal Information Protection Act*
- have a working knowledge of the operating procedures of the school council
- ensure notice of meetings and other school council events is distributed.

Treasurer

If the school council is handling money, through fundraising activities or grants, the treasurer will:

- keep accurate records of all transactions
- report to the school council on the receipt and expenditure of funds
- ensure that records are available, upon request of the school board.

Principal

The principal is the instructional leader who manages the day-to-day operations of the school and is a key member on school council who promotes cooperation between the school and the community. The principal implements the policies of Alberta Education and the local school board, ensures instruction is consistent with the *Programs of Study*, ensures the standards of education are met, evaluates the programs, maintains order and discipline within the school, evaluates and supervises teachers and supervises the evaluation and advancement of students.

On school council, the principal:

- promotes cooperation between the school and the community it serves
- seeks input from parents and community on major decisions that affect the school
- establishes, facilitates, communicates and encourages opportunities for parent and community involvement in school matters
- encourages and supports the formation and continuous improvement of school council
- interprets and shares results of provincial achievement tests and diploma exams
- shares information about the school community
- provides information on the programs in the school and the needs of the students
- refers school council to the appropriate resource for information on laws, regulations and policies that affect school council
- provides an opportunity for the school council to provide input into the school's education plan.

Parents

Parents of children enrolled at the school form the majority of the members of school council. Parents are key members of school council who:

- operate with a philosophy that enhances the team approach to education and community development, viewing the school and the family as a working team
- share their professional knowledge, expertise and life experience with other school council members
- encourage feedback and participation from community groups and individuals
- keep current on community events
- communicate information of interest to the school council and the school community
- share information from school council meetings with the community
- have a clear understanding of the school council's goals
- maintain flexibility while planning to achieve goals
- respect confidentiality
- contact other school councils for support and information

- attend school council meetings
- identify topics for agendas
- work toward building a positive consensus within the school environment
- make recommendations for and attend training sessions on school council effectiveness
- create an inviting school council environment.

Teacher(s)

Each school council must have at least one teacher representative. The teacher on school council:

- promotes a collaborative, collegial model of decision making at the school and for the school council
- provides support for the decisions of the school council
- shares professional knowledge with other school council members
- encourages parents and community members to become involved in school activities
- shares school council activities and information with other staff, parents and community members
- follows the code of ethics and professional protocols set out by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- represents the teachers' perspective.

Community Member

School councils are encouraged to have a community member attend meetings. The community representative can play a strong role in bringing the community perspective into the school. The member helps the school and school council build partnerships with the larger community and, in many instances, acts as a resource to promote cooperative ventures between community and school to enhance student learning.

Suggested Code of Ethics for School Council Members

All members shall:

- abide by the legislation that governs them
- be guided by the mission statement of the school and school council
- endeavour to be familiar with school policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them
- practise the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth
- recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community
- declare any conflict of interest
- encourage a positive atmosphere in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued
- apply democratic principles
- consider the best interests of all students
- respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school council
- do not disclose confidential information
- limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole
- use the appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise
- promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community

- accept accountability for decisions
- accept no payment for school council activities.

What School Councils are Not

It is important to be mindful that, as with all partners in education, there are limits to the work that can be done by a school council. Roles that are not to be taken on by a school council include:

- school governance
- employment issues
- school management
- listening to complaints.

It is not the primary role of school councils to:

- fundraise
- lobby.

When everyone has a clear understanding of his or her role on school council, it fosters mutual respect and collaboration.

School Councils Must Avoid ...

- working on policies that deviate from school board policy
- taking on the role of the teacher, principal or school board, each of which has professional and legal responsibilities within the school system
- discussing performance or conduct of individual students, teachers, other employees, parents or community members during activities related to school council
- commenting on terms and conditions of individual employment contracts for school staff
- discussing matters clearly designated to another person or group through legislation.