



BRIDGING HOME & SCHOOL

Best Practices for School Councils

**Michèle Giroux
Engy Abdel Masieh**



14 Things to Know About School Councils

1. What is a School Council?
2. What is the Role of a School Council?
3. How are School Councils Governed?
4. Who Sits on a School Council?
5. What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Members?
6. What is the Role of the Principal on a School Council?
7. What is a Constitution?
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10. How do Councils Use Committees?
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1. What is a School Council?

A school council is an advisory body that enhances the accountability of the education system to parents by providing a link between the school community and the District, including the school principal and the Board of Trustees.

2. What is the Role of a School Council?

- **Advisory**
 - Board policies, school-based services and community partnerships, school budget priorities, principal profile, local school-year calendar, use of school facilities, etc.
- **Outreach Activities**
 - Developing a sense of community, communication strategies, workshops/seminars, planning/fundraising for extra-curricular activities, etc.

TIP: ALWAYS MAINTAIN A SCHOOL-WIDE FOCUS.

3. How are School Councils Governed?

- Ministry Regulations 612/00 & 330/10: *School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees*
- Board Policy P.014.SCO School Councils
- Board Procedure PR.509.SCO School Council Elections, Constitutions & By-laws
- Board policy and procedure on Management of School Council Funds
- School Council Constitution

4. Who Sits on a School Council?

Councils are comprised of parents, the principal, one teacher, one admin/support staff, at least one community representative and a student (where appropriate). Members are elected annually.

- Elementary - 9 members, at least 5 parents
- Secondary - 11 members, at least 6 parents

TIP: YOU HAVE 30 CALENDAR DAYS TO HOLD YOUR ELECTIONS. GIVE YOURSELF ENOUGH TIME TO GIVE A TWO-WEEK ADVANCE NOTICE TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

5. What are the Roles and Responsibilities of Members?

- **Chair/Co-Chair:** Calls and chairs meetings, sets meeting agendas and works collaboratively with members to assign duties
- **Vice-Chair:** Supports and assists the Chair
- **Treasurer:** Manages finances, reports monthly on accounts
- **Secretary:** Prepares agendas and minutes
- **Members:** Participate and encourage participation

TIP: BEGIN THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH A REVIEW OF THE ROLES OF MEMBERS AND THE CONSTITUTION.

6. What is the Role of the Principal on a School Council?

Principal's Role

- Facilitates and assists council operations
- Coordinates council election process
- Supports and promotes council activities
- Distributes annual report
- Communicates with council through seeking input, sharing information, attending meetings, acting as resource, considering recommendations, liaising with chair, and encouraging participation of school community

TIP: CHAIRS AND PRINCIPALS SHOULD ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO COMMUNICATE OUTSIDE OF REGULAR MEETINGS.

7. What is a Constitution?

Every council must have a constitution which outlines how the council will conduct its business.

- Name, purpose, objectives
- Membership and officers
- Responsibilities of officers
- Rules about meetings, quorum and voting rights
- Process for determining affiliations – Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) membership
- Committees of council and composition
- Rules for meeting conduct and constitutional amendments
- Rules for annual elections and filling vacancies
- Conflict of interest provisions
- Conflict resolution processes
- Membership, chair vs co-chair, delegation of authority

8. What are the Meeting Requirements?

Meetings

- Meet at least 4 times per year
- Quorum – a majority of council present; parent majority of members present
- Meetings are public and written notice is provided
- Meetings follow rules established by council
- Minutes of meeting are recorded and shared

TIP: IF QORUM IS NOT ATTAINED, YOU CAN STILL MEET TO EXCHANGE INFO BUT YOU CANNOT VOTE.

9. How do School Councils Make Decisions?

- School councils should work collaboratively and make decisions by consensus or voting
- Voting is done in accordance with the rules established in the constitution
- In the event that a resolution cannot be reached, the school council chair or the principal shall ask the school superintendent to mediate the disagreement
- If you need help – contact your principal, your Superintendent, or OCASC through your school council liaison

10. How do school councils use committees?

- Committees are created by council
- The committee can be made up of members of the school council or non-member parents, teachers, or members of the community
- Committee meetings are public and notice is provided
- Committees make recommendations to the council

Examples: Fundraising Committee, Constitution or Operational Procedures Committee, Special Events Committee, Communications Committee, Education-Business Partnership Committee, etc.

TIP: COMMITTEES ARE A USEFUL STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE A SPECIFIC GOAL.

11. School councils and School Learning Plans

OCDSB Strategic Plan 2015-2019

Key Priority Areas: Learning, Well-being, Equity, Engagement and Stewardship.

Learning objective: By 2019, the District will improve the achievement of students in all educational pathways.

Targeted Strategy for the Learning objective: Optimize School Learning Plans to develop strategies to support achievement in targeted areas (e.g. numeracy and literacy).

12. Parent Engagement

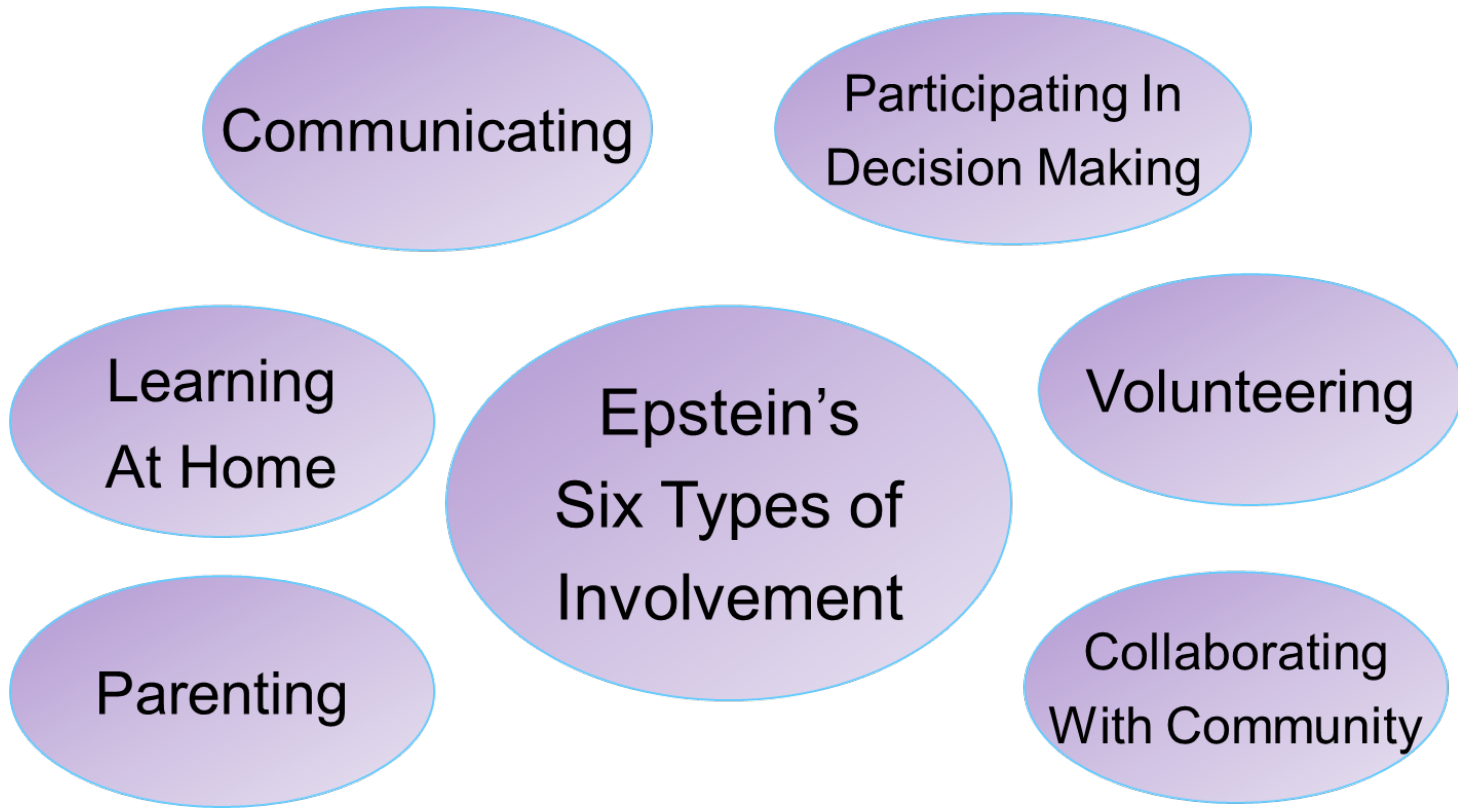
When a parent is involved in their child's education, CHILDREN are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and show higher educational aspirations
- have fewer disciplinary problems
- develop healthy social skills and self-esteem

When a parent is involved in their child's education, EDUCATORS are more likely to:

- give those children heightened attention
- actively communicate with those parents on a regular basis
- give those parents literature and guidance on how to best help their child

How Parents Get Involved



How Parents Typically Engage

School

- Attending Student-Parent-Teacher conferences
- Assisting in the classroom
- Supervising field trips
- Sitting on school councils
- Coaching a sports team
- Volunteering with school clubs or events

Home

- Asking about their child's school experience each day
- Helping children with homework
- Reading the newspaper and discussing age appropriate events
- Creating a comfortable study area
- Taking children to the library, museum, or watching an educational movie together

Barriers to Parent Engagement

Language

New to Canada

Time

Family responsibilities

Personal experience with school

Feeling welcome

TIP: REMIND PARENTS THAT THEY CAN ATTEND A MEETING THROUGH ELECTRONIC MEANS.

13. Best Practices to Encourage Parent Engagement

- Communicate with parents regularly
- Encourage parents to begin volunteering at the Kindergarten level
- Create topical, timely meetings
- Assign parents to productive and meaningful roles
- Host social events where parents and children can have fun together
- Make parents feel welcome
- Optimize parents' skills and interests
- Acknowledge parents for being involved

TIP: USE SURVEYS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE INTERESTS, STRENGTHS, AND SKILLS OF YOUR COUNCIL MEMBERS. SURVEY THE WHOLE PARENT COMMUNITY TO SET SMART PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR.

What You Need to Know



14. Resources and Supports

SUPPORTS

- School Principal
- OCASC
- Parent Involvement Committee
- OCDSB Staff & Website
- Ministry of Education

RESOURCES

- School Council Resource Guide
- OCDSB School Council Newsletter
- Your Child's Education – Be a Part of It!
- Website Translation
- Parents for Education (P4E)
- Conferences and Awards





Questions?