

School Council Tip Sheet

Making Decisions by Consensus or Vote

Making decisions by consensus is the ideal way to manage your School Council. When you make a decision by consensus, it means that every member of Council agrees with the decision. Even people who may not fully support the decision have agreed that it is acceptable and that they will not work against it.

Although arriving at consensus can be time-consuming, it is well worth the effort. Consensus ensures that every member has a voice in the decision-making process and builds respect for differing points of view. It also results in greater commitment and support from all members.

Suggestions for arriving at consensus:

- The Chairperson presents the situation or issue for decision and explains the consensus process.
- Each member states his/her views and opinions, while the rest of the Council listens.
- Members discuss the issue to find common ground and identify areas of disagreement.
- Members offer solutions or options for the Council to consider.
- Members discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the options available.
- The Chair helps members determine the best solution or option
- The Chair asks each member "Can you live with this decision?" If all of the members are not in agreement, members should take a break and start the discussion again.

Majority vote

If you cannot achieve consensus, you may choose to put your decision to a vote. It can speed up the decision-making process because less discussion or effort is needed to arrive at a solution that everyone can accept. However, it can also create divisions among Council members because there is always a winning side and a losing side in any vote. The people who have lost may not be as willing to accept the decision or support the action plans that result from the decision.

If you decide to proceed with a vote, you should follow the voting procedures outlined in the *Ontario Ministry of Education Handbook School Councils: A guide for members* (Section 8.9 Voting).

Most importantly, you must determine that you have a quorum (enough people present at the meeting to make the vote valid) and decide what represents a majority for your Council (usually 50 per cent plus one of the members present).

Questions?

ocdsb.ca | communications@ocdsb.ca
613-721-1820

Source: Content originally produced by Kawartha Pine Ridge School Board