# Greater Essex County District School Board

## Policy: School Councils

Reference No: P-AD-03

The Greater Essex County District School Board envisions a mutually supportive community shaped by a process of active participation, cooperation, and consensus building. The Board values the contributions of parents/guardians and other partners involved in education and believes that the quality of the programs and services offered to its students can be improved and enhanced by building stronger Board, staff, parent/guardian, student, and community relations.

When schools place a priority on the engagement of families, students do better in school. Family involvement promotes a more responsive school climate, which in turn improves student attendance, behaviour, and achievement.

One important way in which families can be involved in school is through participation on school councils. Through the active participation of parents/guardians and the community, the council members' purpose is to assist in the improvement of student learning at home and at school and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians. The primary means of achieving school council's purpose is to make recommendations to the Principal of the school and to the Board for consideration and appropriate response.

Each school under the jurisdiction of the Greater Essex County District School Board shall establish and maintain a school council in accordance with regulations established by the Ministry of Education-Ontario Regulation 612/00.

# Greater Essex County District School Board

## Regulation: School Councils

Reference No: R-AD-03

School councils will provide a forum for people within a school community who are interested in public education to work cooperatively to develop common goals and plans to achieve these goals. Through the active participation of parents/guardians and the community, the council members' purpose is to undertake activities to assist parents/guardians of students at the school to support their children's learning at home and at school and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians. The primary means of achieving the council's purpose is to make recommendations to the Principal of the school and to the Board for consideration and appropriate response.

1. **STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL COUNCILS**
   The GECDSB Policy and Regulation are informed by, and complementary to Ontario Regulation 612/00 the Ministry's regulation and supporting documents (School Councils: A Guide for Members 2001). School councils are established within the first 30 days of the school year.

   (a) Membership of the school council shall include:
   - (i) up to 25 parents/guardians of students enrolled in school (except in an adult school where these positions shall be held by students); or the number specified in the school council by-law;
   - (ii) at least one community representative, or the number specified in the school council by-law;
   - (iii) one teacher (other than Principal or Vice-Principal);
   - (iv) one employee (other than Principal, Vice-Principal, or teacher) assigned to the school;
   - (v) one student, if a secondary school, appointed by the student council;
   - (vi) one student, if an elementary school, appointed by the Principal after consultation with the school council;
   - (vii) the school Principal; and
   - (viii) one member of the Home and School Association, appointed by the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, if such association is established in the school.

Parents/Guardians shall form the majority of the school council and the membership of the school council should reflect the diversity of the school community. All members on the school council are equal partners.

If schools are blended (e.g., School A has grades JK to 2 and School B has grades 3 to 8, representatives from the school councils of partner blended schools may be included.

Representatives from partner blended schools shall be appointed by their school council to provide continuity and consistency in the blended arrangement.

(b) Membership of the school council shall be determined in the following manner:

(i) parents/guardians shall be elected by parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school;
(ii) community representative(s) shall be appointed by the school council;
(iii) one secondary student representative shall be appointed by the student council;
(iv) one elementary student representative may be appointed by the Principal;
(v) one teacher representative shall be elected by members of the teaching staff;
(vi) one employee (other than Principal, Vice-Principal, or teacher) shall be elected by members of non-teaching staff; and
(vii) the school Principal shall be designated a non-voting member.

## 2. OFFICERS

(a) A school council shall have a Chair or, if the by-laws of the council so provide, two Co-Chairs, a Vice-Chair, a secretary, and a treasurer.

(b) A Chair or Co-Chair of a school council must be a Parent/Guardian Member of the council and shall be elected by the members of the council.

(c) A person who is employed by the Board that established the council cannot be the Chair or Co-Chair of the council.

(d) A school council may have such other officers as are provided for in the by-laws of the council.

## 3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) School councils shall:

(i) establish goals, priorities, procedures, and by-laws within the guidelines of this policy and Ontario Regulation 612/00;
(ii) consult with parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council;
(iii) work to ensure input is representative of all of the parents/guardians within the school;
(iv) have the opportunity to provide input on: policies that relate directly to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians, including, conduct of persons in schools, appropriate dress for students, funding by the Board to school councils, fundraising activities of school councils, conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes, and expenses incurred by members and officers of school councils implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system school improvement plans and action plans for improvement, including those based on the EQAO reports on the results of tests of students, and the

communication of those plans to the public the process and criteria applicable to the selection and placement of Principals and vice Principals such other items as from time to time the Principal and/or the Board may request;

(v) maintain a clear focus on meeting the needs of all students;

(vi) ensure a constructive, open atmosphere;

(vii) accept the responsibility to be informed and accountable;

(viii) be actively involved in pursuing solutions to issues;

(ix) be responsible for developing guidelines for dialogue and decision making;

(x) develop strategies to consider the concerns of special interest groups within the school;

(xi) develop strategies to focus on issues, not individuals;

(xii) organize information and training sessions to enable members of the school council to develop their skills as Council members;

(xiii) communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their views and preferences with regard to matters being addressed by the Council, and to report on the activities of the Council to the school community;

(xiv) promote the best interests of the school community; and

(xv) report annually on their progress in addressing their priorities, including any recommendations, to the Principal and to the Board through the Director of Education.

(b) <u>The Chair or Co-Chair of the school council shall:</u>

(i) call school council meetings;

(ii) prepare the agenda for school council meetings in consultation with the school Principal;

(iii) chair meetings of the school council;

(iv) ensure that the minutes of school council meetings are recorded and maintained;

(v) participate in information and training programs;

(vi) communicate with the school Principal;

(vii) ensure that there is regular communication with the school community;

(viii) consult with senior Board staff and trustees, as required;

(ix) inform parents/guardians of the opportunity and application process involved to be a parent/guardian representative on the Greater Essex County Parent Involvement Committee; and

(x) ensure that the annual report of the school council is submitted in accordance with section 15 of this regulation.

(c) <u>The Vice Chair of the school council shall:</u>

(i) assist the Chair with duties as assigned and, in the absence of the Chair, assume the duties of the Chair.

(d) The Secretary of the school council shall:

(i) ensure the minutes of the school council meetings are recorded, maintained in accordance with BA-AP-13 School Fund Accounting, and reported at each meeting;

(ii) maintain minutes at the school of all meetings for a minimum period of seven years after the year ended June 30 and make them available, without charge, to any person;

(iii) have available at the meetings the minutes, Board polices, regulations, administrative procedures, and support documents pertinent to school councils and any materials that relate to the agenda items;

(iv) verify and record all votes; and

(v) act as corresponding secretary as required.

(e) The Treasurer of the school council shall:

(i) ensure the financial records of the school council are maintained in accordance with School Fund Accounting BA-AP-13 and reported at each meeting; and

(ii) maintain the financial records at the school for a minimum period of seven years after the year ended June 30 and make them available, without charge, to any person.

(f) The School Principal shall:

(i) implement the processes necessary to establish and maintain the school council and assist in its operation;

(ii) support and promote the school council's activities;

(iii) act as a resource person to the school council and assist in obtaining information relevant to the functions of the school council, including relevant legislation, regulations, and policies;

(iv) facilitate consultation, at the school level, with school councils on policies that relate directly to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians, including: conduct of persons in schools; appropriate dress for students; fundraising activities of school councils; implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system; school improvement plans and action plans for improvement, including those based on the EQAO reports on the results of tests of students, and the communication of those plans to the public; and such other items as from time to time the Principal and/or the Board may request;

(v) consider each recommendation made by the school council and advise the school council of the action taken in response to that recommendation;

(vi) communicate with the School Council Chairperson;

(vii) ensure that copies of the minutes of the school council's meetings are kept at the school;

(viii) provide for the prompt distribution of memos and correspondence from the Ministry of Education and/or the Board to all school council members;

(ix) assist the school council in communicating with the school community;

(x) encourage the participation of parents/guardians from all groups and of other people within the school community;

(xi) notify and encourage all parents/guardians to become active members of the school council;

(xii) facilitate elections of student, teacher, and non-teaching employee representatives to the school council; and

(xiii) forward a list of the elected and appointed School Council Chair/Co-Chair to the Director of Education following each election or change of membership by the end of the first week in October or within ten (10) days of filling a vacancy.

(g) <u>The Director of Education shall:</u>

(i) implement the provincial legislation and Board policy and regulation regarding school councils;

(ii) ensure a school council exists at each elementary and secondary school under the jurisdiction of the Board;

(iii) facilitate consultation, at the Board level, with school councils on policies that relate directly to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians, including, conduct of persons in schools, appropriate dress for students, funding by the Board to school councils, fundraising activities of school councils, conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes, and expenses incurred by members and officers of school councils implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system school improvement plans and action plans for improvement, including those based on the EQAO reports on the results of tests of students, and the communication of those plans to the public the process and criteria applicable to the selection and placement of Principals and Vice-Principals such other items as from time to time the Board may request;

(iv) ensure that each recommendation made to the Board by school councils is considered and advise the respective school council of the action taken in response to that recommendation;

(v) provide for a Supervisory Officer Greater Essex County Parent Involvement Committee liaison, where required;

(vi) report on school councils annually to the Board; and
facilitate training for all school council members and provide, within reasonable limits, material and personnel resources for the establishment and maintenance of school councils.

## 4. ELECTION OF PARENT GUARDIAN MEMBERS

The election of Parent/Guardian Members of school councils shall be held during the first 30 days of each school year.

(a) A person is qualified to be a Parent/Guardian Member of a school council if they are a parent/guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school.

(b) A person is not qualified to be a Parent/Guardian member of a school council if:

- (i) they are employed at the school; or
- (ii) they are employed elsewhere by the Board, unless they take reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of Parent/Guardian Members of that employment.

(c) A person is qualified to vote in an election of Parent/Guardian Members of a school council if they are a parent/guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school.

(d) The Principal, in collaboration with the School Council Chair, will set the date of the election of parent guardian members.

(e) The Principal of a school shall, at least 14 days before the date of the election of parent/guardian members, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the date, time, and location of the election to every parent/guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school.

(f) The notice may be given by:

- (i) giving the notice to the parent's/guardian's child for delivery to their parent/guardian;
- (ii) posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents/guardians;
- (iii) posting the notice through GECDSB's electronic channels.

(g) The election of Parent/Guardian Members shall be by secret ballot.

(h) The Principal shall preside over the election proceedings until the election of the Chair.

## 5. OTHER ELECTIONS

The elections of Non-Parent/Guardian Members of school councils shall be held during the first 30 days of each school year.

(a) A person is qualified to vote in an election of a teaching member of a school council if they are a teacher, other than the Principal or Vice-Principal, who is employed at the school.

(b) A person is qualified to vote in an election of a non-teaching staff member of a school council if they are employed at the school, other than the Principal, Vice Principal, or any other teacher.

(c) A person is qualified to vote in an election of a Secondary School Student Member if they are a student enrolled in that secondary school.

## 6. TERM OF OFFICE

(a) The term of office for all school council members will be for one year.

(b) A person elected or appointed as a member of a school council holds office from the later of:

- (i) the date they are elected or appointed; and

(ii) the date of the first meeting of the school council after the elections until the date of the first meeting of the school council in the next school year.

(c) A member of a school council may be re-elected or re-appointed, unless otherwise provided in the by-laws of the council.

## 7. VACANCIES

(a) A vacancy in the membership of a school council shall be filled by election or appointment in accordance with the by-laws of the council.

(b) If an election is held to fill a vacancy in the membership of a school council, the section(s) within this regulation governing elections apply.

(c) Vacancies in the office of chair Co-chair or any other officer of a school council shall be filled in accordance with the by-laws of the council.

(d) A vacancy in the membership of a school council does not prevent the council from exercising its authority.

## 8. REMUNERATION

(a) In the spirit of volunteerism, school council members shall not receive any remuneration for serving on the school council or officer of a school council.

## 9. REIMBURSEMENT

(a) Reimbursement of expenses will be in accordance with Board policy and will be considered only in the following situations:

(i) for meetings held out of the jurisdiction, with prior written approval of the Director of Education; and

(ii) other miscellaneous expenses as requested and pre-approved.

## 10. MEETINGS

(a) A school council shall meet:

(i) within the first 35 days of the school year, after the elections are held on a date fixed by the Principal of the school; and

(ii) at least four times during the school year.

(b) A meeting of a school council cannot be held unless:

(i) a majority of the current members of the council are present at the meeting; and

(ii) a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent/guardian members.

(c) All meetings of a school council shall be open to the public.

(d) All meetings of a school council shall be accessible to the public. A school council may hold its meetings at the school.

(e) The Principal of a school shall, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the dates, times, and locations of the meetings of the council to every parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school.

(f) the school council shall have access to reasonable photocopying and other support to facilitate the operations of the school council.

11. **COMMITTEES**

(a) A school council may establish committees to make recommendations to the council, in accordance with its by-laws.

(b) Every committee of a school council must include at least one Parent/Guardian Member of the council.

12. **VOTING**

(a) In accordance with their advisory role, school councils will strive to develop recommendations by consensus. In the event a consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote will be taken.

(b) Each member of a school council is entitled to one vote. The Principal shall be designated a non-voting member.

(c) Each member of a committee of a school council is entitled to one vote.

13. **BY-LAWS**

School councils shall make by-laws governing:

(a) the election process and the filling of vacancies in the membership of the council;

(b) school council rules in proceedings in cases of conflict resolution; and

(c) a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.

A school council may make other by-laws governing its proceedings.

14. **FUNDRAISING**

(a) A school council may engage in fundraising activities and shall ensure that the funds are raised and used in accordance with applicable policies (School Fund Accounting BA-AP-13) established by the Board.

15. **ANNUAL REPORT**

(a) Every school council shall submit, on or before July 15, an annual written report on its activities to the Principal of the school and to the Board.

(b) Where a school council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.

(c) The Principal shall, on behalf of the school council, give a copy of the report to every parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school on or before the date of the notice of elections.

16. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

(a) Members of the school council will make every effort to resolve any internal disputes within the council which may arise.

(b) Should an internal school council dispute arise that cannot be resolved by the members of the school council, the School Council Chair and the Principal will so advise the Supervisory Officer assigned to their school.

(c) The Supervisory Officer will assess the unique needs of the situation and determine an appropriate approach. Such an approach may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (i) assistance by the Director of Education or designate;
- (ii) assistance by the area Trustee;
- (iii) assistance by the Greater Essex County Parent Involvement Committee Chair;
- (iv) assistance by a Board-trained facilitator in dispute resolution techniques; and
- (v) assistance by an external trained facilitator.

17. **INCORPORATION**

A school council shall not be incorporated.