

Carl A. Nesbitt Public School
CONSTITUTION OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL
(SCHOOL COUNCIL BY-LAWS)

Revised October 2011

PREAMBLE

BECAUSE the Rainbow District School Board is committed to the belief that successful education requires a strong partnership and active involvement between the school, the home, the staff and members of the community;

AND BECAUSE the Rainbow District School Board believes that relationships between these partners will be strengthened by the formation of School Councils in each school;

THEREFORE, it is the policy of the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Education that each school establishes a School Council.

CARL A. NESBITT PUBLIC SCHOOL, hereby establishes a School Council which will operate according to the provision of the constitution that follows:

MANDATE

The School Council will serve in an advisory capacity to the school's principal and the Board to promote continued excellence in education, place the overall interest of the school and students first.

School Council will develop a communication and action plan each year for school academic and facility enhancement and to provide a link to the general parent community to consult, promote input, represent and/or reflect its school community's diversity, opinions, concerns or questions reasonably, about matters under consideration or being developed by the council. (See consultation with Parents by School Councils), in Section 4: Consultation, for additional information; refer to School Council Binder 3.1)

Each school council is accountable to the school community it represents. (See Regulation 612/00 for additional information, attachment 1, School Council Binder 3.1)

School councils are able to make *any* recommendation to the principals and school boards on any matter again placing the overall interest of the school and students first.

Principals and school boards, in turn, must consult with school councils on a variety of matters that affect student learning. They must also consider all recommendations made by school councils and report back to the councils on how they plan to act on their advice.

(For more information please see Regulation 613/00 School Operation, duties of Principals; refer to School Council Binder 2.1-3.1)

Council will review, consider and make recommendations to the principal and where appropriate to the School Board on the following areas requiring consultation with School Councils:

- All initiatives that relate to the improvement of student achievement or enhance the accountability of the system to parents;
- The provincial, Board and/or the school policy regarding code of conduct;
- The provincial and/or the school policy regarding appropriate dress for students;
- The Board's policy on reimbursement of expenses incurred by school council members;
- The Board's policy on fund-raising activities by school council members;
- The Board's policy or process for resolving internal school council disputes;
- The Board's and/or school's action plans for improvement based on reports of EQAO test results;
- The Development of communication plans regarding the board's and or school's action plans for improvement;
- The Board's criteria and process for the selection and placement of principals and vice-principles;
- Any new education initiatives at the board and/or school level;
- The development of a plan providing for co-instructional activities by the Board
- The sharing (at least once a year) of the school plan providing for co-instructional activities

The School Council may also serve as an advisory body for the following additional areas that require possible consultation with School Councils (as set forth by Section 4.3 of the Ministry Guide). Such areas may include:

- The local school year calendar, including the beginning and end of this school year (modified school year calendar);
- Scheduling special school events;
- Board and/or school policies regarding field trips for students;
- List of approved activities to fulfil the mandatory community involvement requirement as stated in Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No124;
- Review the board's and/or the school's safe-arrival policy and implementation plan as required in PPM No 123;
- Use of volunteers in schools;
- School Closures;
- Twinning schools;
- Review of school boundaries;

- Naming of new schools and other board property;
- Busing and transportation of students;
- Capital improvement plans for schools;
- Purchase of learning materials;
- Developing principal profiles;
- Developing school profiles;
- Student-homework policies;
- School/classroom organization;
- Additional funds to school councils according to their local priorities;
- School Budget priorities;
- Identify and establish its goals (educational, social, cultural, etc.), priorities, (i.e. school budget, fundraising target/goals, local capital improvement) and procedures on an annual basis and evaluate its success in achieving these goals on a yearly basis;
- At the completion of setting Council goals, a school community introduction letter shall be distributed by School Council at the beginning of each new school council year which would contain contact information, etc.;
- Prepare/review the School profile at the last/first regular council meeting of the new school term;
- Organize information and training sessions to enable members of the council to develop their skills as Council members;
- 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;
- Establish committees to carry out specific tasks (action plans) and may include membership from the school community;

The School Council shall not have any of the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation for the Board, the principal or collective agreements.

MEMBERSHIPS

a)Members of the School Council shall include:

- Parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school;
- Community representative(s);
- The school principal;
- A teacher;
- A non-teaching staff member;
- Student representatives optional in elementary grades.

Voting members would include all of the above with the exception of the School Principal. In the event of a tie; the Chair may cast the deciding vote.

Council may invite external members of the community to participate in issue discussions in order to seek advice as is deemed necessary.

- b) Parents and guardians shall form the majority of the School Council. Carl A. Nesbitt School Council membership shall not exceed twenty-one (21) members.
- c) The school principal is appointed by the School Board and shall be a standing member.
- d) Community members shall be appointed by Council in response to identified needs or expertise that might be needed in the school.
- e) The Chair shall be a Council member who is a parent and shall be elected by a Council member.
- f) The Vice-Chair shall be a Council member who is a parent and shall be elected by Council.
- g) One family member per household may vote on Council.
- h) The Recording Secretary shall be appointed by Council and shall be a Council member.
- i) A timekeeper shall be appointed by Council, who shall be a Council member, to ensure the smooth and timely running of regularly scheduled meetings and shall be a Council member.

MEMBERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Participation on the Carl A. Nesbitt Public School Council and its Committees is on a voluntary basis and the names of all Council members shall be kept on file at the school.

- a) The Parent Members of the School Council shall:
 - Participate in Council meetings and on any committees established by the school council and contribute to the discussions of the school council;
 - Participate in information and training programs;
 - Act as a link between the School Council and the community;
 - Solicit the views of other parents and members of the community to share with the school council
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.
- b) The Chair of School Council shall:
 - Call Council meetings;
 - Prepare the agenda for the meetings;
 - Notify/remind council members of meeting dates and times;
 - Chair School Council meetings;
 - Ensure the minutes of the meetings are recorded and maintained and assist in maintaining a record of all council proceedings;
 - Participate in information and training sessions;
 - Communicate with the school principal on regular council business as well as on behalf of the majority of a consensus of opinion of council;
 - Ensure there is regular communication with school community;

- Facilitate the resolution of conflict;
 - Consult with senior Board staff and trustees as required;
 - Assist and promote internal communication between council members on a regular basis of events;
 - Assist and help in the new Council Orientation session(s);
 - Initiate input from council to set yearly goals for work and financial matters and forward Board or Bylaw changes to all council members;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.
- c) The Vice-Chair shall;
- Assume the duties of the Chairperson in his/her absence;
 - Assist the Chair in providing a yearly plan for school council in committee work, fund raising and updating school council bylaws when needed;
 - Assist and help in the new Council Orientation session to familiarize all parents on their school and council guidelines of operation;
 - Organize the school council binder with all updates yearly. The binder will be kept in the office;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.
- d) The Principal shall:
- Attend all school council meetings, unless this responsibility has been delegated to the vice-principal;
 - Distribute promptly to each council member material identified by the ministry for distribution to school council members and posts material in a school location accessible to parents;
 - Consider each recommendation made by the school council to the principal and returns to the council with the action taken in response to recommendation;
 - Solicit views on matters pertaining to the establishment or amendments of school policies and guidelines relating to student achievement, accountability of the education system to parents, and the communication of those plans to the public;
 - May solicit the view of the school council on any matter;
 - May participate on any committees established by the school council;
 - Act as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies and collective agreements;
 - Obtain and provide information required by the Council to enable it to make informed decisions;
 - Communicate with the Chair of the Council as required;
 - Ensure copies of the minutes of Council's meetings are kept at the school;
 - Assist the Council in communicating with the school community;
 - Encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the school community;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.

- e) The Recording Secretary shall:
 - Keep a full and accurate account of all proceedings and transactions of all Council meetings – on the event of an absence or at the request of the recorder, Council shall appoint an alternate recording secretary;
 - Ensure the constitution is up on our website for reference. In June, a letter will be drafted and distributed to parents to check the website at the beginning of the school year;
 - Maintain an updated Council membership list;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.

- f) The Community Representative(s) shall:
 - Contribute to the discussions of the school council;
 - Represent the community's perspective;
 - May participate on any committees established by the school council;
 - Help build partnerships and links between the school and the community;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.

- g) The Timekeeper shall:
 - Ensure the smooth and timely running of regularly scheduled meetings;
 - Show flexibility for allowing discussions of items beyond their allotted timeframe as warranted by the nature of the discussion;
 - Observe the council's code of ethics and established bylaws.

TERMS OF OFFICE

- a) Elected and appointed members of the Council shall hold office for a one-year term of office. Council members may seek additional terms of office to total of 3 consecutive terms.
- b) The School Council year shall begin on October 01 and end on September 30th.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Council shall be terminated when a member:

- No longer has a child enrolled in the school and the member is a parent;
- Is no longer employed at the school.

In case of the Chairperson's termination of membership, the Vice Chair shall assume the position of Chairperson.

NOMINATION /ELECTION PROCEDURES

- The election of Council members will be at the first scheduled Council meeting within the first 30 days of each school year.
- Elections shall be coordinated by the previous year's Council and the principal in a way which will ensure that all parents and staff members have the opportunity to stand for membership and vote for their representatives of choice, at the first Council meeting of the School Year.
- It will be the responsibility of the principal to notify persons qualified as potential Council members.
- Persons shall be elected by direct ballot if the members exceed twenty-one (21) parents.
- Parents/guardians shall be elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school.
- The Chair of the Council shall be a member who is also a parent and shall be elected by the Council.
- The Vice Chair of Council shall be a member who is also a parent and shall be elected by the Council.
- Community representatives shall be appointed by the Council
- The principal shall be a standing member.
- The teacher representative(s) shall be elected by members of the teaching staff.
- The non-teacher representative(s) shall be elected by members of the non-teaching staff.
- Other than the principal service on Council is voluntary; candidates may accept or refuse nominations/appointments.
- The principal and a parent(s)/guardian(s) will act as scrutinizers during an election.
- If the number of nominees/interested persons is equal or fewer than the number of elected positions then the nominees/interested person fill those positions by acclamation.
- Each school is to develop its own form for nominations/express of interest.

VACANCIES

- A vacant position of existing Council created during a term may be filled by Council through the selection of an eligible person to complete the vacating member's term of office by consensus of Council. Where a consensus cannot be reached, it can be reached by a majority vote. Nominations can be made by any council member.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

RULES OF ORDER

In the absence of any constitutional provisions to the contrary, all proceedings of the Council and any sub-committees shall be governed by Robert's Rule of Order (<http://www/robertsrules.com/>).

CODE OF ETHICS

- A member shall consider the best interests of all students.
- A member shall be guided by the school's and the school board's mission statement
- A member shall act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a school council, as identified by the school's operating guidelines, the school board, and the Ontario Ministry of Education.
- A member shall become familiar with the school's policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.
- A member shall maintain the highest standards of integrity.
- A member shall recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.
- A member shall treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse options to be shared without interruption.
- A member shall encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
- A member shall acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the council.
- A member shall respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operations of the school council.
- A member shall not disclose confidential information.
- A member shall limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
- A member shall use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.
- A member shall promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community.
- A member shall declare any conflict of interest.
- A member shall not accept any payment or benefit financially through school council involvement.

MEETINGS

- A minimum of four (4) official meetings of Council shall be held each year. Meetings shall be monthly to work with current communication practices. They can be either working sub-committee meetings or regular meetings as the agenda and the need is recognized.
- Meeting dates and times for the year will be established by council at the first meeting following the election.
- All scheduled meeting dates shall be publicized openly to all members of the school community.
- Minutes of Council meetings shall be recorded and available to all school community members.
- Additional meetings may be held by Council a deemed necessary and these extra meetings may be held providing proper notice of date and time has been provided to all members, parents and staff.
- All regular meetings of Council are public.
- Council may invite members of the community for consultation and/or advice.
- Members shall honour their commitment to School Council by attending regularly and in the event of a missed regular meeting to follow up with regular news to save time at the next regular meeting.
- Council meetings shall be no longer than one (1) hour in length. A maximum of two 15 minute extensions may be approved by a vote of a majority of those members present.

QUORUM

Quorum for all regular meetings of the School Council shall consist of a majority of the voting membership of Council (50% plus 1).

AGENDA

- The Chair of Council shall ensure the agenda for all meetings is prepared and distributed to Council at least four working days prior to a regular meeting.
- Pertinent data related to matters to be discussed will be circulated with the agenda when possible.
- Each meeting shall begin with:
 - i. Call to order;
 - ii. The acceptance of the agenda as it stands or with approved changes;
 - iii. The acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting, as it stands or with approved changes;
 - iv. Correspondence;
 - v. Business arising from the minutes;

- vi. Committee reports – it shall be the responsibility of the chairs of sub-committees and its speakers to maintain or delegate a written record of their meeting(s) which will then be given to the recording secretary who will attach it to the minutes for distribution;
- vii. Principal's report;
- viii. New business;
- ix. Adjournment.
 - Additional items may be added to the agenda as required and time permitting.
 - Any member of the Council or community may refer a matter within the Council mandate by presenting a written submission to a member of Council. It will be the responsibility of the Council member to submit the item to the Chair.

MINUTES

The minutes of all previous meetings of Council will be distributed approximately 5-10 days prior to the next regular council meeting along with the meeting agenda. Once approved, the minutes will be distributed within two weeks of the meeting at which they have been approved to all Council members, the Principal and any interested parties. The approved minutes shall also be placed on file at the school in a known location for school community viewing by the recording secretary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Council will forward its recommendations to the principal and/or the Board in writing with appropriate documentation.
- Recommendations from Council shall be included in the Principal's yearly report.

VOTING

The desired method of reaching decisions is through consensus. When consensus cannot be reached within a reasonable time period, the following rules shall be applied:

- Each member of Council will have one vote.
- Written votes from absent members will be accepted by the Chair or Principal on or before the meeting date. Written votes must be delivered in a sealed envelope and will be opened at the time of the tallying of the votes.
- All members are encouraged to vote but shall be permitted to abstain.
- Generally the Chair will not vote. However, in the event of that a resolution receives a tie vote, the Chair may cast the deciding vote.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived, or potential.
2. Members of the council shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families, or business entities in which they may have an interest, stand to benefit either directly or indirectly by decisions of the council.
3. A member shall exclude him- or herself from discussion in which:
 - A conflict of interest is likely to result;
 - The member's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities as a member of the school council may be jeopardized;
 - The council member, his or her relatives, or a business entity in which the member may have an interest, may gain or benefit either directly or indirectly as a result of actions that may be taken by the principal or board in response to advise that the council provides to the principal board.
4. A member shall not accept favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the school.

CONFLICT OF RESOLUTION

- Any *personal* resolutions needed between members that are individual concerns and not general school council business will first be encouraged by any council member, to resolve quickly together outside of council meetings or with a mutually decided third party for clarity.
- For school Council business and communication resolutions needed, every school council member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concern and/or opinion.
- Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times.
- Speakers will be allowed to speak without being interrupted.
- The Chair's or designate's responsibility is to clarify the statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised and to set out the joint interests of all members.
- If no common ground can be identified, the chair or designate will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further.
- If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the chair or designate shall request the intervention of a superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.

COMMITTEES

Committees or sub-committees (standing or ad hoc) may be established as needed by Council to carry out specific tasks and may include membership from

the school. Committee meetings may be held as required without public notice of time or date.

One sub-committee shall be a “Fundraising Committee” which would have the following duties:

- Establish fundraising financial goals at the beginning of each new school year;
- Prepare a ‘global school’ fundraising plan with recommendations on how to apply special grade fundraising goals;
- School Council has the goal to not hinder any students’ opportunities in participating in events because of funding;
- Ensure that all fundraising activities be entered regularly on one central school council calendar which would then be forwarded to the school community to ensure that all parents know what is happening.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (TERMS OF REFERENCE)

The Council will review and amend the constitution as needed annually.