

## PIAC Conference

### Notes

#### Morning Session:

#### **Election and By-Laws**

1. What do you do when council is running smoothly but may not follow all election/council bylaws? \*

*Current councils must think of establishing precedents for future councils. While not following by-laws may be working now, what happens if future councils decide to ignore all of the by-laws based on past practice? Having said that, for by-laws to be effective they must reflect the school community and how it works most effectively. For example, if your community has a history of one vote per family at council, your by-laws may reflect this; if you wish to elect a Chair in May and the remainder of your council in September, your by-laws may reflect this; and, your executive may consist of more than a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Finally, ensure that your by-laws have a sound amending formula should your community change and future councils wish to have their guiding principles reflect this.*

2. How closely do we need to follow the bylaws?

*See above.*

3. What should we do when school officials want to change the bylaws when they don't get the required election results?

*All by-laws should have an amending formula so that any changes suggested by staff or parents must follow a precise process. An example could read: any amendment must be made available to the parent body 30 days prior to the next council meeting. Arguments for and against may be included. At the meeting, there will be an opportunity for discussion. The amendment must pass with 2/3 of the votes present.*

4. Is it okay to change council elections for key officer positions to May-June rather than September? *Regulation 612 states that elections must take place 30 days after the first day of school in September. This allows for the inclusion of new parents to the school and all councils should work to be **inclusive, accountable and transparent**. The term of the previous council runs until that election meeting so continuity is there. However, should a council wish to elect a Chair in May to ensure they are up and running by September, this may be acceptable.*

5. How do you get school administration to work with the council ie election of council officers?\*

*The principal has a set list of responsibilities as outlined in Regulation 612:*

***The principal of a school shall, at least 14 days before the date of the election of parent members, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 4 (6)***

***(7) The notice required by subsection (6) may be given by,***

***(a) giving the notice to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and***

*(b) posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 4 (7).*

***(8) The election of parent members shall be by secret ballot. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 4 (8).***

*Council must remember that they are an advisory body to the administration. If they approach their principal in an atmosphere of partnership and respect, it is hoped the administration will respond in kind. Michelle Munroe, Central Co-Coordinator for Parent and Community Involvement may also be contacted for assistance.*

6. If elections are improperly done, what can be done? \*

*Refer to the School Council Handbook for guidelines.*

*Section 3.3 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>*

## Finance

1. Who decides how to spend the money? The allocation and expenditure of all parent-raised funds should happen at a school council meeting with the support of council members AND the parent community. The Ministry of Education funding of \$500 per school council for parent outreach should be directed to projects identified by the school council as a whole.
2. Must every dollar raised by Council be discussed by the parents, voted on by council and be passed? It is encouraged that every school council act in a manner that is **inclusive, transparent and accountable**. School councils are to prepare a fundraising plan in collaboration with the school principal, in the beginning of the year. This fundraising plan should be presented and agreed to by the parent community. Once the fundraising plan has been “ratified”, then funds are raised per the events outlined and monies dispersed according to the plan. You may have within your by-laws a discretionary fund of a small amount that does not require the full parent body to approve. This discretionary fund would be to pay for unforeseen expenses when hosting an event, etc. It would simply require the approval of the school council members.
3. Is it true council raised funds cannot be used for certain items/categories (eg textbooks, teacher wages) and when council funds are used to make a purchase the purchase is now the property of the TDSB? Is this a concern? **Yes, parent raised funds are not to be used to pay salaries, complete maintenance on the school property and other projects that should be covered by the educational funding provided by the Ministry of Education OR covered through the various collective agreements of the Board. Parent-raised funds are to be used for enhancing school experiences and to support specific school initiatives. For example: book bags for the reading buddy program.**
4. How do you introduce new fundraising initiatives?  
**Communicate, communicate, communicate. Use a variety of communication tools available to you to communicate the new fundraising initiative and drive interest in what you are doing.**

Make it sound exciting. Ensure you tell everyone why you are doing it. What's the benefit to the students – fun, exciting, buying something particular for the school, etc.

5. What should policies be for corporate sponsorships for fundraising activities? School councils should refer to the Board's fundraising policy and operational procedures documents AND the Board's advertising policy and operational procedures when considering corporate sponsorships for any fundraising activities. These documents can be downloaded from the TDSB website.
6. How much can a principal be involved with spending council money? The development of a fundraising plan is done in consultation with the school principal. Where school council funds are allocated is a collective decision.

## Rules and Regulations

1. What do I do when a principal doesn't support parent involvement, parent initiatives or does not address parent complaints?  
*If working in an atmosphere of partnership and respect does not work, contact Michelle Munroe at the Parent and Community Involvement Office at the Board for advice and assistance – [michelle.munroe@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:michelle.munroe@tdsb.on.ca).*
2. What is the parent council for?  
*Regulation 612 states that the purpose of school councils is to" improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. It also establishes the rights of councils to express their views on any issues that are important to them".*
3. How do we influence the selection of principals and VP's?  
*The Board recently passed Option 5 as proposed by PIAC. This allows for parent participation in the interview process **at the school level**. There will be more communication from PIAC on this in the new year. In the meantime, make sure your principal/VP profile is up-to-date.*
4. How do we increase the likelihood that Council recommendations will be followed by administration?  
*As in any form of consultation and advice sharing, working closely with the other parties, seeking their best knowledge, listening to the concerns of all stakeholders, and presenting workable solutions will, hopefully, make recommendations more likely to be considered. Remember, principals are required to report back to Councils on any advice given. This should include reasons for not accepting the advice. Councils could then ask how compromises could be reached.*
5. What exactly is the Principals role in Council?  
*This information is available on page 5.7 of the handbook in the attached power point.*

## Afternoon Session

### **Finance**

1. Parent fundraising vs TDSB fund – how do we know which to use? eg. Playground, A/C, etc.? Parent raised funds are not to be used to pay salaries, complete maintenance on the school property and other projects that should be covered by the educational funding provided by the Ministry of Education OR covered through the various collective agreements of the Board. Parent-raised funds are to be used for enhancing school experiences and to support specific school initiatives. For example: book bags for the reading buddy program. If a question arises as to whether it is an appropriate use of the funds, contact the Fundraising Hotline at 416-397-3510.
2. Why do we fundraise? Is there a better use of our resources/time? The regulations state that school councils MAY be involved in fundraising. It does not stipulate that you must do so. Fundraising is really a local initiative. Why do it? Firstly, some fundraising events can build community by bringing parents together within the school. Events such as a multicultural evening of food and music are great ways to bring in people, mingle and contribute to the fundraising efforts. Secondly, the goal of fundraising is to enhance programs and experiences of the students within the school. So to have a pizza lunch or hot dog lunch provides for an change of pace for the students and raises money. Funds spent on scientist-in-the school or other presentations are enhancements to the programming delivered in the school.
3. How can we equalize fundraising/dollars between schools? At the present time, there is no formal mechanism to do so. Informally, some school councils partner with struggling school councils to offer knowledge (know how), people-power, shared fundraising events and shared resources.
4. What creative strategies are PC's utilizing to raise funds? The fundraising guidebook offers a few suggestions for successful fundraising school council campaigns. Contact your local PIAC representative to put you in touch with other neighbourhood school councils that have successful fundraising campaigns.
5. What is available to school councils and who gets to spend it? There are 3 sources of funds for school councils outside of fundraising. Firstly, the school board allocates a stipend to each school for school council activities. The stipend is \$1.25 per FTE (full time equivalent) and ranges from \$300 to \$1000. This is found on the school budget and is to be used to support having school council meetings – photocopying, refreshments, and so on. It is on the school budget and should be discussed with the principal for the allocation of those funds for the intended purpose. The Ministry of Education through the Parent Involvement Policy provides

each school council with \$500 for parent outreach activities. This money again is delivered to the school via the school budget. The allocation for this money is to be a school council decision and is to be used for parent outreach such as a workshop, newsletter, and so on. The third pool is through the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant offered by the Ministry of Education. It is an application process, normally completed in the September/October timeframe. A maximum of \$1000 can be applied for by a school council to support Parent Engagement/Outreach projects. Please refer to the Ministry's website for examples of successful grant projects.

6. How is funding distributed to schools? Ministry funding is delivered to the Finance department of the Board. School budget are then determined once the Ministry funding has been granted and delivered online to each principal. School council monies are recorded on the school's budget as a separate budget line. This includes board money and the ministry monies.

### **Rules and Regulations \***

1. Are there written guidelines and where can we get them?  
*The School Council Handbook should be available at your school or online at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>*
2. What is a target attendance for a council meeting? There should be five parents plus principal, teacher rep, staff rep, student rep if secondary level, and community rep.
3. How much structure is required for running a school council meeting? (Roberts's rules?)  
*The Handbook (see above) provides suggested outlines for agendas and minutes. Both must be available for every meeting and posted for parental reference. As well, minutes must be kept for four years.*  
*The structure of a meeting should reflect the school community. Committees are a great way to ensure time is not taken up discussing every topic from start to finish. Councils should be voting on committee motions/suggestions. Decisions may be made by motion/seconded/ vote or through consensus. Remember, you would like parents to come to the next meeting! Make it worthwhile and as painless as possible!*
4. Bylaws and policies should be in clearer language (and alternative languages). Is this possible and how?  
*Translation is available through the TDSB. Most TDSB policies are available to the top 10 languages spoken within the Board.*
5. Do we really need bylaws?  
*Current councils must think of establishing precedents for future councils. While not following by-laws may be working now, what happens if future councils decide to ignore all of the by-laws based on past practice? Having said that, for by-laws to be effective they must reflect the school community and how it works most effectively. For example, if your community has a history of one vote per family at council, your by-laws may reflect this; if you wish to elect a Chair in May and the remainder of your council in September, your by-laws may reflect this; your executive*

*may consist of more than a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Finally, ensure that your by-laws have a sound amending formula should your community change and future councils wish to have their guiding principles reflect this.*

6. What are the Principal's roles and responsibilities?

*This information is available on page 5.7 of the handbook (see above) and on the attached power point.*

7. What is the Principal's role?

8. How do we make clear what we are supposed to do? The responsibilities of Chair and Principal are outlined in the Handbook and on the attached power point. Other than that, communicate with your executive and/or council to decide the roles and responsibilities necessary to run a successful council at your school. Joyce Eptsein's Six types of parent involvement are a good way to plan think about engaging parents. ( Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-Making and Community)

9. How do we ensure activities organized by the council affect children's performance?

*One way is to make sure you consult with staff before organizing or advising on activities for the school. This includes fundraising for school purchases. Trust that the staff has your child's best academic performance as a goal. Know that parent involvement improves achievement at all levels.*

*If you are providing funding for a school or classroom activity, it is responsible fiscal policy to ask that staff provide an accounting of how the funds were spent. This may or may not include receipts. As well, evaluating Council work at the end of each year is a good way to reflect on decisions before moving to the next year's budget.*

10. Is it every parents' right to know about any policy they want to know about and how would they do it?

*Yes. Regulation 612 states that the purpose of **school** councils is to " improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. It also establishes the rights of councils to express their views on any issues that are important to them". This cannot always be done effectively without some understanding of particular policies. All TDSB policies are available on their website – <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/ppf/> - and are translated for our newcomer parents.*

11. What is the role of the community rep?

*This information is available in the Handbook on page 5.7. See above.*

## **Volunteers**

1. How can we increase volunteer participation?

*Advertise your work and celebrate your successes! We are more apt to join a winning team.*

*Make sure parents and caregivers are made to feel that their ideas were considered and their time valued. This will encourage volunteers to come back; persuade them to bring others; and, provide staff with a good example of how to work with parents and their proposals.*

*Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Use emails, bulletin boards, newsletters, word-of-mouth, the telephone, and persuasion. Provide a variety of volunteer options. Many parents*

*are nervous to come into the school or sit at a meeting. Perhaps there is something they could do from home? Make most the work fun...or at least rewarding.*

2. Are parents volunteering in class warmly received by teachers or are they viewed as spies?  
*All in all, warmly received.*
3. What are ways to communicate with volunteers?  
*See above.*
4. How do we engage parent involvement? Meetings, parent-teacher interviews?  
*Make sure the School Council is visible at most school events. At secondary level, especially, have a Council table in the front hall with information available for parents, particularly council meeting dates. If your school doesn't do it, provide refreshments for parents between interviews. Advertise meetings in as many ways as possible, including the school's automated dialing system, if available.*
5. How do we expand our volunteer base without intimidation?  
*Try surveying parents at the start of the year for information on what they would like from their Council, how they might help (give suggestions), when they are available, and when and how to contact them.*
6. How do we get volunteers?  
*Hopefully, see above!*

### **Elections and By-Laws**

1. What must every parent (council member) know to make a difference?  
*Research shows when "schools, families and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."  
(Henderson/Mapp)  
It also tells us that "Parents want to be involved and influential in their teens' education. Students in middle and high schools want their parents involved in meaningful ways. When schools reach out to involve families, more parents become involved." (Epstein)  
And remember to ensure that your council is **inclusive, accountable and transparent.***