

Education Act – Section 55

School council

- 55 (1) For each school operated by a board, a school council must be established in accordance with the regulations.
- (2) The majority of the members of a school council must be parents of students enrolled in the school.
- (3) A board of a separate school division may by resolution require that the parents of students enrolled in a school operated by the board who are members of the school council declare themselves to be of the same faith as the electors of the separate school division, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic.
- (4) A school council may, at its discretion,
- (a) advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school,
 - (b) perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board in accordance with the delegation,
 - (c) consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister,
 - (d) consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the board and the superintendent, and
 - (e) do anything it is authorized under the regulations to do.
- (5) Subject to the regulations, a school council may establish and implement policies in the school that the school council considers necessary to carry out its functions.
- (6) A school council may make bylaws governing its meetings and the conduct of its affairs.
- (7) Subject to the regulations, a board may establish and implement policies respecting school councils.
- (8) A board shall establish a dispute resolution process to address disputes between the principal and the school council with respect to policies proposed or adopted for a school.
- (9) The Minister, on the request of the board, may dissolve a school council without notice at any time if the Minister is of the opinion that the school council is not carrying out its responsibilities in accordance with this Act and the regulations.
- (10) Where a school council has been dissolved by the Minister pursuant to subsection (9), a school council must, in accordance with the regulations, be established after the start of the school year immediately following the year in which the school council was dissolved.
- (11) The Minister may make regulations
- (a) respecting the establishment of school councils, the election or appointment of the members of a school council, the term or other conditions of election or appointment and the dissolution of a school council;
 - (b) respecting the roles of the principal and the school council of a school and their respective powers, duties and responsibilities;
 - (c) respecting the re-establishment of school councils that have been dissolved by the Minister pursuant to subsection (9);
 - (d) respecting any other matter the Minister considers necessary respecting school councils;
 - (e) exempting a school or class of schools from the application of this section.

APPENDIX

Education Act

SCHOOL COUNCILS REGULATION

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Definitions

1 In this Regulation,

- (a) "early childhood services program" means an early childhood services program provided by a board under section 21 of the Act;
- (b) "establishment meeting" means a meeting referred to in section 2;
- (c) "executive" means the executive of a school council;

- (d) "model of governance" means the process and structure used by a school council to make decisions regarding its business and affairs;
- (e) "school community" in respect of a school means
 - (i) students enrolled in the school and their parents,
 - (ii) children enrolled in an early childhood services program at the school and their parents,
 - (iii) the school staff, and
 - (iv) other persons who have an interest in the school;
- (f) "school day" means a day scheduled for the purpose of instruction, examinations or other student activities where student-teacher interaction and supervision are maintained.

Establishment meeting

2(1) If a school that is required to have a school council has no school council, the school must, within 40 days after the start of the school year, hold a meeting for the purpose of establishing a school council.

(2) If fewer than 5 parents are in attendance at an establishment meeting or if the meeting is not successful in establishing a school council, the principal may adjourn the meeting to a later date and establish an advisory committee to carry out one or more duties or functions of a school council in the interim until a school council is established.

(3) Any advisory committee established under subsection (2) is dissolved on the establishment of a school council.

Notice of establishment meeting

3(1) If a school is required to hold an establishment meeting, the principal must give notice of the meeting to the following persons:

- (a) a parent of each student enrolled in the school;
- (b) a parent of each child enrolled in an early childhood services program at the school;
- (c) the school staff;

- (d) other members of the school community who, in the principal's opinion, should be given notice.
- (2) A notice under subsection (1) must
 - (a) describe the purpose of the meeting,
 - (b) set out the time, date and location of the meeting, and
 - (c) be given at least 10 school days before the date of the meeting.
- (3) A notice under subsection (1) may be given by any means the principal considers appropriate, including electronic means.
- (4) If an establishment meeting is adjourned under section 2(2), notice of the adjournment date must be given in accordance with this section.

Chair and secretary at establishment meeting

4 The principal must decide who is to act as the chair and who is to act as the secretary at an establishment meeting.

Agenda at establishment meeting

- 5(1) The persons attending an establishment meeting must
- (a) decide, subject to section 7, on the size of the school council,
 - (b) decide on the model of governance for the school council,
 - (c) decide, subject to subsection (2), on the term of office of each member of the school council,
 - (d) elect, subject to subsection (2), the initial members of the school council referred to in section 7(l)(d),
 - (e) decide, subject to section 8, on the size of the executive,

(f) decide on the term of office of each member of the executive, and

(g) elect the initial members of the executive.

(2) For greater certainty, but without restricting the generality of subsection (1)(a), the persons attending an establishment meeting may decide that for the purposes of section 7(1)(d), the school council may include

(a) all parents of students enrolled in the school, and

(b) if an early childhood services program is offered at the school, all parents of children enrolled in an early childhood services program at the school

who wish to be members.

Right to vote at establishment meeting

6 Despite section 5, only persons who attend the establishment meeting and are

(a) parents of students enrolled in the school, or

(b) parents of children enrolled in an early childhood services program at the school

are entitled to vote on matters raised at the meeting.

School council membership

7(1) A school council must include the following members:

(a) the principal of the school;

(b) at least one person who is a teacher at the school, elected or appointed by the teachers at the school;

(c) if the school includes a senior high school program, at least one person who is a student enrolled in the high school, elected or appointed by the students enrolled in the high school;

(d) in accordance with section 55(2) of the Act, parents of students enrolled in the school;

- (e) if an early childhood services program is offered at the school, parents of children enrolled in the program.

(2) The members of a school council referred to in subsection (1) may establish a process to appoint as members of the school council one or more persons who are not parents of students enrolled in the school but who have an interest in the school.

School council executive

8(1) A school council must have a chair and any other members of the executive determined by the persons attending an establishment meeting.

(2) A parent of a student enrolled in the school or, if an early childhood services program is offered at the school, a parent of a child enrolled in the program must be elected chair of the executive.

(3) Despite subsection (2), a member who is not a parent referred to in subsection (2) may be elected chair of the executive if no such parent is willing to be nominated as chair.

(4) Subject to subsection (2), every member of a school council is eligible to be elected as a member of the executive.

Faith of school council members

9 Subject to any resolution passed under section 55(3) of the Act, the members of a school council may be of any faith.

Remuneration of school council members

10 No member of a school council shall receive any remuneration for acting as a member of the council.

Prohibition against incorporation

11 No school council shall incorporate under the Societies Act or Part 9 of the Companies Act.

Responsibilities of board

12(1) A board must provide the school council with an opportunity to provide advice on the development of the school's

- (a) foundation statements, if any, respecting the school's vision, principles and beliefs,
- (b) policies,
- (c) annual education plan and annual results report required by the Minister to be reported under section 67 of the Act, and
- (d) budget required to be reported under section 139 of the Act.

(2) A board must provide the school council with

- (a) the results for the school from provincial assessments and an interpretation of those results, and
- (b) the same information that the board disseminates to students, parents or electors under section 67(2) of the Act.

(3) A board must at all reasonable times allow the school council free and full access to timely and accurate information of the board that is publicly available, including board policies and minutes of board meetings.

Donations

13(1) A school council may receive donations on behalf of a board but no school council shall raise funds or otherwise solicit donations in any manner that would require a gaming licence under the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act.

(2) A school council must handle and report all money it receives, if any, in accordance with applicable policies and procedures of the board.

Duty to report to the board

14(1) The chair of a school council must prepare and provide to the board by September 30 of each year a report

- (a) summarizing the activities of the school council in the previous school year, and
 - (b) detailing, in accordance with the policies referred to in section 13(2), the receipt, handling and use of any money by the school council in the previous school year.
- (2) A school council must retain at the school a copy of the minutes for each meeting of the school council and make them available to the board or the public on request.
- (3) A school council must retain the minutes for each meeting of the school council for at least 7 years.

Date for first meeting of school council

15 For any school year, the first meeting of the school council must be held within 40 days after the start of the school year or as specified in the bylaws of the school council.

Suspension of school council

- 16(1) If a quorum is not available for a meeting of a school council and the meeting has been rescheduled on 2 or more occasions, the board may suspend the operation of the school council until the following year.
- (2) If the operation of a school council is suspended, the principal may establish an advisory committee to carry out one or more of the duties or functions of the school council until a new school council is established under subsection (3).
- (3) If the operation of a school council is suspended under subsection (1), a new school council must be established within 40 school days after the start of the next school year in accordance with sections 2 to 8.

Bylaws of school council

17(1) Each school council may make bylaws respecting the conduct of its business and affairs, including, without limitation, bylaws

- (a) respecting the calling of regular, special or annual meetings of the school council;
- (b) subject to section 5, respecting the election of members of the school council;
- (c) subject to section 5, respecting the election of members of the executive;
- (d) respecting the role of the chair and other members of the executive relating to the conduct of the school council's affairs;
- (e) respecting the number of times the school council must meet each year;
- (f) respecting the location of school council meetings;
- (g) respecting the number of school council members that constitutes a quorum at meetings of the school council;
- (h) respecting a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.

(2) A bylaw under subsection (1) does not come into force unless it is approved by a majority of

- (a) parents of students enrolled in the school, and
- (b) parents of children enrolled in an early childhood services program at the school

who vote at a special meeting of the school council called for that purpose.

(3) The bylaws continue in force from year to year unless

- (a) they are amended at a special meeting of the school council called for that purpose, and
- (b) the amendment is approved in accordance with subsection (2).

Fees prohibited

18 No school council shall be charged a fee for the use of the school or school facilities for the purpose of holding a meeting of the school council.

Exemptions

19 The following are exempt from the application of section 55 of the Act and this Regulation:

- (a) a school for resident students of the Government as described in section 4(7) of the Act that is provided in an institution approved by the Minister;
- (b) a school for students that is provided in an institution approved by the Minister.

Transitional

20(1) In this section, "former regulation" means the School Councils Regulation (AR 113/2007).

(2) A school council established under the former regulation is deemed to have been established under this Regulation.

(3) A member of a school council referred to in subsection (2) continues to serve in the same capacity under this Regulation.

(4) Bylaws made by a school council under the former regulation continue in force as if made under this Regulation, except to the extent of any inconsistency with the Act or this Regulation.

Repeal

21 The School Councils Regulation (AR 113/2007) is repealed.

Expiry

22 For the purpose of ensuring that this Regulation is reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be repassed in its present or an amended form following a review, this Regulation expires on August 31, 2029.

Coming into force

23 This Regulation comes into force on September 1, 2019.

School Council Participant Roles

School Council Chair

It is expected that the School Council Chairperson will be a parent of a student enrolled in the school. The Chair should be someone who can work collaboratively and knows how to organize both programs and people. The Chair should actively encourage others to become involved in meaningful ways.

Typical Chairing duties include:

- Chair all meetings of the School Council;
- Coordinate with the Principal to create meeting agendas;
- Communicate with the Principal on a regular basis;
- Decide all matters relating to rules of order at the meetings;
- Ensure that School Council Operating Procedures are current and followed;
- Be the official spokesperson of the School Council;
- Ensure there is regular communication with the whole school community,
- Review any communication to the school community prior to distribution and include the Principal in same;
- Stay informed about School Board policy that impacts School Council;
- Comply with the School Councils Regulation by providing the school board with an annual report that summarizes the School Council's activities for the previous school year, including a financial statement relating to money, if any, handled by the School Council, no later than September 30th;
- Have general responsibility for all activities of the School Council;

Chair's Relationship with the Principal

The Chair's role is key to the success of the School Council. Partnerships work – so use them! One important responsibility is regular and ongoing communication with the school Principal. This relationship of mutual trust and respect must be nurtured, being mindful of common goals for the learning community.

Vice-Chair

On some School Councils, the role of Chair is shared, either through the creation of co-Chairing positions or through the Chair's dependence on the Vice-Chair to undertake part of the work.

Typically, the Vice-Chair's duties are to:

- In the event of resignation, incapacity or leave of absence of the Chair, fulfill the Chair's responsibilities;
- In the absence of the Chair, supervise the affairs and preside at any meetings of the School Council;
- Work with and support the Chair in agenda preparation;
- Ensure the appropriate management, in compliance with PIPA, of any personal information collected on behalf of the School Council;
- Assume responsibility, in consultation with the School Council, for communicating with the fundraising association or other parent groups within the School;



School Council Participant Roles

- Promote teamwork and assist the Chair in the smooth running of the meetings;
- Keep informed of relevant School and School Board policies;
- Prepare to assume the position of Chair in the future;
- Assist the Chair and undertake tasks assigned by the Chair.

Secretary

The School Council Secretary typically will:

- Act as a recorder at each meeting and ensure that the minutes are prepared accurately to reflect the directions agreed to at the meeting;
- Keep minutes, correspondence, records and other School Council documents; and ensure that all relevant documents (as per legislation) are available to the public in an accessible location in the School, for a period of 7 years;
- Maintain a dated record of all the members of the School Council who have knowingly provided their contact information, in compliance with PIPA;
- Distribute, as determined by the School Council, agendas, minutes, notices of meetings and notices of other events;

Treasurer (if handling funds, depending on school board policy)

If the School Council is handling money, through fundraising activities or donations, the Treasurer will:

- Keep accurate records of all financial transactions;
- Ensure that records are available upon request of the School Board or school community;
- Be responsible for the deposits of all monies paid to the School Council in whatever bank, trust company, credit union or treasury branch the School Council may order;
- Present a full, detailed account of receipts and disbursements to the School Council as required by the School Council, and prepare the financial statements for the annual report;
- Supervise the affairs and preside at any meetings of the financial committee.

Principal

The Principal is the instructional leader who manages the day-to-day operations of the school and is a key member on School Council who promotes cooperation between the school and the community. The Principal implements the policies of Alberta Education and the local school board, ensures instruction is consistent with the *Programs of Study*, ensures the standards of education are met, evaluates the programs, maintains order and discipline within the school, evaluates and supervises teachers and supervises the evaluation and advancement of students.

As a provincially-mandated member of the School Council, the Principal:

- Works in collaboration with the Chair to prepare School Council agendas
- Supports the Chair in running efficient School Council meetings, as per the School Council Rules of Order
- Provides contextual information, as requested by the School Council, on matters relating to the school
- Promotes cooperation between the school and the community it serves



School Council Participant Roles

- Seeks input from the School Council, parents and community on major decisions that affect the school
- Establishes, facilitates, communicates and encourages opportunities for School Council, parent and community engagement in school matters
- Encourages and supports the formation and continuous improvement of School Council
- Interprets and shares results of provincial achievement tests and diploma exams
- Shares information about the school community
- Provides information on the programs in the school and the needs of the students
- Refers School Council to the appropriate resource for information on laws, regulations and policies that affect School Council
- Enables the School Council to provide input into the school's education plan.

Teacher

Each School Council must have at least one Teacher Representative, as per the legislation. A Teacher Representative contributes to a successful School Council in the following ways:

- Promotes a collaborative, collegial model of decision making at the school and for the School Council and provides support for the decisions of the School Council
- Shares professional knowledge with School Council members
- Encourages parents and community members to become involved in school activities
- Shares School Council activities and information with other staff, parents and community members
- Follows the code of ethics and professional protocols set out by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- Represents the teachers' perspective.

Example: **Feature Teacher** on the agenda – a different teacher each month gives a brief update/summary of what their class/grade is doing. May want to include a few students as well (bring in new parents to the meetings).

Communication Officer

The Communication Officer works under the direct supervision of the School Council and undertakes all responsibilities in consultation and cooperation with the School Council Chair and the School Principal.

In general, the Communication Officer applies his/her communications expertise to improve the links between the School Council and the School Community and to advance the goals and profile of the School Council.

The Communication Officer of the School Council, in consultation with the Chair and the Principal, may:

- Assist the School Council in developing, implementing and evaluating a Communication Policy and Communications Plan.
- Prepare School Council Newsletters and the School Council's section of the School Newsletters.
- Provide information for the School Council section of the School website to inform of the purpose and structure of the School Council, highlight activities and accomplishments of the School Council and to promote parental involvement.
- Ensure that the information in the School Council section of the (School Name) Parent's Handbook is updated annually.



School Council Participant Roles

- Develop promotional material for the Annual General Meeting, special events, projects and programs and other School Council materials as directed by the School Council and in keeping with the School Council Communications Policy and the Communications Plan.
- Collaborate with Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) in obtaining templates and samples for promotional and other School Council materials.
- Assist the Chair and the School Council by proofreading and editing reports, correspondence and other material, to ensure they reflect the School Council in a professional and consistent manner.
- Develop communication strategies which facilitate two-way communication between the School Council and the School Community. (Surveys, discussion groups, social media).
- Promote the School and its activities with the public (local media, community newspapers), as requested by the Principal.
- Assess the effectiveness of School Council publications, distribution systems, etc. and recommend improvements.
- Attend School Council meetings regularly.
- Managing social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, website).

Parents and others

Parents of children enrolled at the school form the majority of the members of School Council.

Parents and other members of the School Council will:

- Share their professional knowledge, expertise and life experience;
- Encourage feedback and participation from community groups and individuals;
- Communicate information of interest to the School Council and the school community;
- Share information from School Council meetings with the community;
- Have a clear understanding of the School Council's objectives;
- Attend School Council meetings;
- Identify possible topics for agendas;
- Serve as a liaison between the School Council and their organization or area of responsibility.



Executive Transition Checklist for School Councils

It's an exciting time when new people are elected to fill the necessary positions on any executive team. For some, the new world of this type of leadership can be a little confusing, overwhelming and even a bit scary. There may be much to learn, to do and to remember. This quick checklist may help to ensure that some of the important operational items are not forgotten during the transition of one executive team to another.

Person Responsible	Action	Completed Date
Chairperson	Notify School Division, in writing, of all new and returning Executive members. Timeline: 30 days	
	Notify ASCA, in writing (form on ASCA website), of new Chair and contact information. Timeline: 30 days	
	Meet with outgoing Chairperson (if available) and principal to become familiar with practices, processes and promises, and to receive relevant historical records for smooth transition. Timeline: 2 – 3 weeks	
	Ensure that the School Council Annual Report has been submitted to the school board by September 30 th (for the previous year).	
	Attend any orientation sessions offered. Timeline: 30 – 60 days	
Vice- Chairperson	Arrange updating of website with new names and contact information (if needed). Timeline: 2 weeks	
	Source and distribute information on resources, support, training available for executive (if needed) such as ASCA, School Division, etc. Timeline: 30 days	
	Meet with outgoing vice-chairperson to become familiar with practices and processes. Timeline: 2 – 3 weeks	
	Attend any orientation sessions offered. Timeline: 30 – 60 days	
Treasurer (if necessary)	Meet with outgoing treasurer to become familiar with financial records, processes, practices and to receive historical records. Timeline: 2 – 3 weeks	
	Attend any orientation sessions offered. Timeline: 30 – 60 days	
Secretary	Provide summary (or draft minutes) of meeting to all members and interested parties. Timeline: 2 – 3 weeks	
	Attend any orientation sessions offered. Timeline: 30 – 60 days	
	Obtain and become familiar with relevant historical records and practices. Timeline: 2 – 3 weeks	
Others	Attend any orientation sessions offered. Timeline: 30 – 60 days	



SAMPLE**School Council Annual Report**

School: _____ Reporting Year: _____

Executive: *List the members who held positions as officers in the past year.*

Name

Position

Meeting Dates: *List the dates of regular school council meetings.*

Date of First School Council Meeting of the Year: _____

School Council Activities: *Summarize the major activities of the past year and provide an overview of activities or initiatives planned for the next year.*

Financial Statement (attached): *Summarizes the finances handled by the school council, not the registered fund raising association/society, during the past year, if applicable.*

School Council Chairperson

Date



Advising Activity

All participants assume the role of the principal for the activity

Background: Literacy Program

The school's literacy program began the previous year. When making decisions regarding this year's budget allocation, the principal must decide if funding for the program is to continue.

Input from other partners/participants:

Teachers: Teachers from certain grades are requesting teacher assistants in the classroom due to the increased number of students. Other teachers want to continue the literacy program.

Alberta Education: There is an initiative from Alberta Education to focus on student literacy.

School Board: There is no additional funding allocated for school literacy programs.

Federal Government: A funds matching program exists for schools to receive additional funding; however, the amount needed to receive the grant would deplete this school's entire budget for special programs.

Parents: Parents have been very vocal about the reading levels of students and have been phoning the principal with their concerns.

School Council: The School Council has advised the principal there are concerns about the increase in the number of students in the classroom. School Council would like to have teacher assistants or certain classes divided to reduce those levels.

Principal: There have been many other unrelated requests that will affect the budget, including computers and the science program has requested new software and training to fulfill a new curriculum requirement.

Students: Recent assessments indicate that not all students are achieving an acceptable standard in Language Arts

DECISION:

Does the principal ensure there are funds for the literacy program?

Please provide the rationale for the decision and how you made the decision.



Advising Activity

All participants assume the role of the principal for the activity.

Background: Homework Policy

You are anticipating some discussion at tonight's school council meeting regarding the amount of homework students are expected to complete. You have done an analysis of the situation, compared other schools – same grades and subjects and have found there is slightly more homework on average being assigned.

You have made the following observations:

Teachers are aware of each others' position on homework assignments. Most of the teachers are firm believers in homework and usually assign it daily. One of the goals in the school's three-year plan relates to enhanced literacy (particularly regarding reading comprehension) and there has been a concerted effort to assign more reading with the homework.

The school board practice has been to allow each school to set homework schedules – there is no division policy regarding homework.

The Superintendent has had some calls from parents upset with the amount of homework their children are bringing home each night and has asked you to handle it.

The School Council has been raising concerns parents not only feel there is too much homework being given out at the school, but also regarding the amount of reading expectations placed on students with respect to the assigned homework. They are suggesting the school formulate a homework policy that limits/describes the amount of homework assigned at each grade level. They would like the draft policy to be circulated to all students' parents for input prior to finalizing.

Students have been coming to school looking tired, and complaining of not being able to complete homework assignments due to extra-curricular activities such as hockey, dance, soccer, music lessons and in some cases, part-time employment.

DECISIONS:

Does the principal act on this information?

Which group(s) influences the decision?

As the principal, do you inform each stakeholder of your decision and the rationale?

Is the School Council invited to have input and engagement in the homework policy?



What CAN School Councils do??

Some concrete examples for school councils to support the learning objectives of the school.

Goal: Build Citizenship Characteristics

School Council Actions:

- Promote multicultural activities; presentations from community leaders, families, students highlighting culture, food, dance, customs, clothing, etc.
- Network with schools/school councils with similar demographics and goals.
- Host family activities in the school: reading nights, potluck dinners, parent reception on first day of school (welcome new and/or Kindergarten parents).

Goal: Promote Healthy Lifestyles

School Council Actions:

- Encourage “Choose always” foods to be used for lunch and snack programs (Hot Lunch, Fun Lunch, etc.)
- Sponsor and promote lunch and afterschool fitness programs (Zumba, Skipping, Hip Hop Dance, sports for fun, etc.)
- Support and encourage intramurals. Provide volunteers, recognition, etc. when possible.
- Host family information sessions on nutrition, mental health, physical health, drug and alcohol abuse awareness, Digital Citizenship, etc.

Goal: Enhance Student Achievement

School Council Actions:

- Organize a Homework or Study Club utilizing student mentors from neighbouring junior or senior high schools.
- Host parent information sessions on core curriculum expectations (math, science, language arts, social studies)
- Promote an Adult Reader Club inviting adults in the community to come read to/with students.
- Promote an Adult Mentor Club inviting adults in the community to mentor students in any area of learning.
- Support home reading: provide books, book exchanges, recognition of reading milestones, etc.

Goal: Support our School Community

School Council Actions:

- Organize a clothing donation drive.
- Contribute to breakfast, lunch and snack programs.
- Collect extra school supplies for distribution to students in need.
- Provide or source translation services.
- Seek additional funding sources and community programs to assist students and families.



Joint Annual Planning

Whether newly created, or having been in existence for a period of time, School Councils (SCs) and/or Fundraising Associations (FRAs) sometimes find themselves struggling to figure out “what to do now”, or having lost the drive for a particular direction they thought they were heading.

To help avoid this uncertainty of purpose, every year it’s helpful to do some brainstorming with people at the same level of organizational structure...the leaders...just to get the ball rolling. Joint Annual Planning is a collaborative process, and is flexible enough to allow for modification to suit individual school community cultures and needs.

How to start a Joint Annual Plan:

Organize a time when the SC Chair, the Principal and the FRA President (you could invite/include the “vice’s” as well, if desired) can meet to explore some “organizational priorities” from each other’s perspectives. Avoid using this opportunity to make any decisions or commitments with respect to discussion topics, areas of emphasis, events, or funding; instead use it as an “information gathering” session where each of you takes a turn to list organization-specific “supporting and enhancing student learning” points, complete with reasonable justification, that the respective members may feel are important to focus on. Examples may be: Whole-School Health, improving reading comprehension, emphasizing Digital Citizenship, upgrading physical activity equipment or increasing successful transitions to post-secondary.

If possible, encourage everyone to think short and long term: what’s on the horizon this year, next year, the year after that? Ensure that all participants know that this isn’t intended to be a debate, or an opportunity to “convince”, it’s just a conversation. Each “leader” (Chair/Principal/ President) should commit to providing all of the information shared/gathered to their audiences (SC Exec and members, school staff – and students if appropriate, FRA Exec and members) and asking for their thoughts, suggestions, feedback. (PS: Even if one of them drops the ball, it’s really important for you to keep your promises, and to follow through. This helps to establish the integrity of the SC or FRA and the sincerity of your leadership.)

At the next SC or FRA meeting, openly discuss the priorities identified by each group, and the rationale, and include the perspective of logistics (if we want to do this, do we have the time, energy, people to make this happen?) for each of the identified items. *It’s really important to remind the group that they are not obligated to undertake anything which they don’t feel they can support either in principle or in manpower.* What they do need to do is identify which priorities/projects/items they can “get behind”.

With that completed, the people who originally met should get together again, and share their findings – what did each group decide they could support and devote their time/energies to? Again, including a timeline (this year, next year, etc.) for everyone is really important. Where are the commonalities? What priorities did all 3 of the groups agree upon in principle? Are there possibly some adjustments in time frame that may need occur to reach a compromise (i.e.: school can’t support something this year, but very happy to do so next year)?



Joint Annual Planning

In this setting, the SC Chair or the FRA President is the ‘negotiator’....the person who strives to find the middle ground...something that all parties can “live with”. They are not there to make decisions or promises; only to share what their members have said they can support, and to seek information to present back to members. The decisions to actually “mobilize” (start planning and executing the plans) have to come from the members and the people who will “do the work”. Ideally, the second meeting results in one mutually-agreed upon priority (that each group will likely support) identified for each of the next three years. For a super enthusiastic, energetic group, there may be two priorities for each year.

From there, the leaders and their respective “team” start the work needed to accomplish the goals, remembering to keep everyone (school community including Administration, potential funders, etc.) informed along the way as to where their support is needed, when their input will be crucial and/or how their hard-earned money will be spent. For any fundraising initiative by any of the partners, it’s vitally important to decide and communicate, ahead of time, where excess funds, if any, will go...will they be applied to the next item on the list or will they be applied to a major long-term project? This enables funders to make informed decisions, and not come back and accuse anyone of being secretive, shady or non-transparent.

Each year before school starts, the above process should be repeated. Include an opportunity to evaluate the actions of the previous year (successful, unsuccessful, completed, not started, etc.) in a non-critical, purely factual manner. It’s also beneficial to include a quick report on “status to date” with respect to any multi-year plans (i.e.: the progress of the Wellness Committee, the number of students enrolled in post-secondary programs or funds acquired towards the playground) as well as confirming that what had previously been identified as priorities for the upcoming year are still “on the radar”. If there have been changes in the school community that result in something else being needed more urgently, or an original item is no longer relevant, modify the options for the upcoming year accordingly, and begin the process of seeking input from all members once again.

Consistently applying this process will decrease the chances of the School Council or Fundraising Association feeling lost or purposeless, and may even attract more school community members to become actively engaged as they will know what to expect.

Important: The one or two mutually agreed upon priority items identified for each year aren’t necessarily all that each group will work or focus on throughout the year. The School Council may choose some other areas in which to apply its energies (i.e.: advising on school policies), and the Fundraising Association may determine that they want to continue supporting something that wasn’t on the “priority list”, but know is still wanted and appreciated (i.e.: funding for field trips). The principal will obviously continue to have staff and students focus in areas critical to student success. The intended outcome of a Joint Annual Plan is not that it is the only purpose, but that it is a common purpose worthy of everyone’s efforts.



School Council – Advise/Decide/Lobby or Reframe?

A limited number of education decisions are made at the School Council level. Determine if the School Council advises, decides, lobbies or reframes in the following sample items. Multiple answers for one item may be possible depending on specific circumstances.

1. School Fees
2. Field Trips
3. School Community Assessment/Survey related to School Council work
4. Methods of Promotion and Recruitment for School Council
5. Proximity of Overhead Power Transmission Lines
6. Advocacy Resolutions for ASCA's Annual General Meeting
7. Report Card Format and Timing
8. School Events Schedule
9. Individual Classroom Management/Teacher Quality Concerns
10. Annual General Meeting Date and Protocol
11. Fundraising
12. Traffic and Parking Complaints
13. Educational/Informational Sessions for Parents
14. School Council Orientation and Plan
15. School Dress Policy
16. School Budget
17. Parent/Teacher Interviews
18. Extracurricular Activities Offered in the School
19. School Council Representatives with Other Organizations
20. Student Conduct Issues
21. School Board's Three-year Education Plan
22. Provincial Achievement Test Results and Diploma Exam Results



Take-Away Assignment

Consider creating your own, personalized, School Council Purpose statement, using the guidelines below. If possible, try to blend it with the legislated mandate of a school council (to advise the principal) and the intended outcome (support and enhance student learning). Examples are on the next page.

Your School Council Purpose: why is your work important?

The specific purpose of your School Council is an important component of the school culture. The School Council purpose defines why the School Council exists. The purpose of the School Council is not only the answer to the question “What does our School Council do?” which typically focuses on events, activities and volunteers, the purpose is also the answer to the question, “Why is the work of our School Council important?” This may sound like a simple question, but it is greatly significant for the School Council and for each member.

The purpose is the cause that defines the contribution your School Council makes to the school community through its work. When a School Council purpose is meaningful to a member, that person feels a connection to the work that is not only rational—it’s also emotional.

Your School Council Purpose Statement: be brief in length and broad in scope

A purpose statement is a few, crucial words that inspire and motivate members who care about making that contribution. The purpose of an entertainment company might be: To make people happy. The purpose of your partner fundraising association might be: To provide financial resources that support and enhance students’ education. The purpose statement is brief so members can remember it and use it to guide their daily actions. Additionally, the purpose statement is broad in scope to allow your School Council to adapt over time to a changing world while keeping a constant, consistent central focus. People and activities may change, but the purpose endures. Think of your School Council as a living entity; it is a vehicle for improving individual lives in your school community.

Defining your School Council Purpose: include everyone in the process

When defining your School Council purpose, be sure to include everyone in the process. Participation in the process builds commitment. Use surveys, workshops or even town hall meetings with small group discussions to come up with possible purpose statements. Then, let everyone respond to a collection of options to see the statement that best conveys the fundamental reason why the School Council exists.

A purpose statement does not have to be unique. Other School Councils doing similar work may have a similar purpose. Your purpose should use words that are meaningful to members and appropriate for your School Council.

Your School Council Purpose Statement: screen using the six criteria

Be sure your School Council purpose meets the six purpose criteria:

1. It is a contribution to the school community—not a product or service.
2. It answers the question: Why is our work important?
3. It is inspirational and motivational.
4. It uses powerful words.
5. It is brief in length so members will remember it.
6. It is broad in scope to allow for future opportunities and change.

A source of meaning: unite members with your School Council Purpose

Take the time to unite members around the School Council purpose so that School Council work is more than daily, monthly or occasional tasks. School Council work should be viewed as a contribution to society through the school community and a source of meaning for each member.



Take-Away Assignment

Adapted from: <http://sheilamargolis.com/2011/06/17/use-organizational-purpose-to-unite-employees/>

Please write down some of your ideas for a personalized School Council Purpose statement.

"As we support and enhance student learning by advising the principal at _____ School, we will

or

"Through advising the principal at _____ School, we support and enhance student learning by

