

## **SCHOOL COUNCILS**

### **Background**

The Division encourages School Councils to participate as active partners in education with the Division. The Division encourages the School Council to build a supportive school community and to advocate on behalf of the school and school system “working together to help every student learn and excel”.

### **Procedures**

1. Each School Council shall be duly formed and constituted in a manner consistent with the School Act and Ministerial Order # 033/2007.
2. The School Council shall provide parents and the school community with a means to consult and may provide advice to the Principal on matters pertaining to the school and its operations, subject to the provisions of the School Act. Some of the more common topics for discussion include the school:
  - three-year plan
  - policies (e.g. school fees, school council policies)
  - budget
  - volunteers
  - achievement results
  - guidelines and principles for the school resource allocations
  - policy on use of facilities by the larger community
  - facility renovations
  - methods of communicating with the public
  - promotion of the school in the community
  - programs offered in the school
  - Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects
  - celebrations (e.g. Graduation ceremonies)
3. In addition, the School Council may advise the Board on any matter relating to the school including the:
  - Division’s three-year plan
  - budget
  - policies and administrative procedures
  - Division-wide programming priorities
  - infrastructure priorities
  - transportation issues
  - suggested criteria for hiring a school principal
4. School Councils may also advocate on behalf of schools provincially through their Alberta Home and School Councils’ Association (AHSCA).
5. The School Council may carry out other school related functions as identified by the Principal, or the Board periodically, if agreed to by the School Council.

6. The Board will establish a Council of School Councils.
7. School Councils must avoid:
  - Working on policies that deviate from school board policy
  - Taking on the role of the teacher, principal or school board, each of which has professional and legal responsibilities with the school system
  - Discussing performance or conduct of individual students, teachers, other employees, parents or community members during activities related to school council
  - Commenting on terms and conditions of individual employment contracts for school staff
  - Discussing matters clearly designated to another person or group through legislation
8. Each School Council Chair shall provide the Superintendent with an annual report by September 30, containing the following:
  - 8.1 Three main successes of this year's school council.
  - 8.2 Three potential objectives (unfinished work) for next year's school council.
  - 8.3 Two areas in which in-service activities would benefit next year's school council.
  - 8.4 A financial statement relating to money handled by the school council, if any, in the school year.
9. Schools must retain an electronic copy of school council minutes for seven (7) years.

#### 10. Resolution of Conflict

The Division recognizes that the Principal of a school must provide instructional leadership in the school and direct the management of the school. At the same time, the Division recognizes that a School Council can advise the Principal respecting any matter relating to the school. The Division acknowledges there may be occasions when the School Council's advice and school administration's decision regarding a specific issue may differ. The Division believes there should be a conflict resolution procedure with follow-up to an appeal system available to the School Council for issues of major concern whereby the Principal chooses not to follow School Council advice and where the School Council wishes to have their position clarified or resolved with outside help or heard by another authority where this help does not resolve the issue.

The School Council may utilize a conflict resolution procedure and, if necessary, an appeal procedure whenever an unresolved dispute arises between the Principal and the School Council regarding policies or practices proposed or adopted for the school. The process will be as follows:

##### 10.1. Conflict Resolution Procedure

10.1.1 In the event of such a dispute, the Chair of the School Council shall submit a written appeal to the Superintendent regarding the dispute, within fourteen (14) days from the time when the dispute arose.

10.1.1.1 The written appeal from the School Council Chair to the Superintendent shall include background to the dispute

including what the Chair perceives the issue to be, what the advice of the School Council was to the Principal, and what the Principal chose to do or not do regarding that advice.

10.1.1.2 A copy of the School Council Chair's letter to the Superintendent must be copied to the Principal.

10.1.2 The Superintendent shall appoint a mediator, within seven (7) days, who is mutually acceptable to the Principal and to the School Council Chair to attempt resolution to the conflict.

10.1.3 The mediator shall set a date, time, and place for the mediation to occur within fourteen (14) days from the time of appointment by the Superintendent.

10.1.4 Following this conflict resolution procedure, the mediator will provide the Superintendent with written details of the outcome of the mediation session(s).

## 10.2 Appeal Procedure

10.2.1 In the event this conflict resolution process does not solve the issue to the School Council's satisfaction, the Chair of the School Council shall submit a written appeal to the Superintendent within fourteen (14) days from the time of the mediation.

10.2.2 The Superintendent shall establish a hearing date, time, and place which allows the parties to the appeal sufficient notice to prepare for the appeal. This may include arranging to be represented by legal counsel.

10.2.3 The Superintendent shall be guided by the following with regards to the appeal hearing:

10.2.3.1 Introduction of the participants to the hearing;

10.2.3.2 Explanation of the purpose of the hearing;

10.2.3.2.1 To provide an opportunity for both parties to make representations surrounding the disputed issues, and in support of their position before a decision on the appeal is made;

10.2.3.2.2 To permit each party to hear the other party and to respond to statements as presented by the other party; and

10.2.3.2.3 To allow the Superintendent to know the facts and disputed issues, and to hear any evidence or information the Superintendent deems relevant prior to making the decision in respect of the appeal.

- 10.2.3.3 The School Council Chair and the Principal will be given an opportunity to review their positions regarding the dispute on the policy proposed, or adopted for the school, and the issues surrounding the dispute. The School Council Chair shall proceed first and be given a full and ample opportunity to raise concerns before the Superintendent. The Principal shall then be given ample opportunity to explain the school administration position to the Superintendent regarding the disputed matter.
- 10.2.3.4 The Superintendent may question the parties to clarify the facts.
- 10.2.3.5 The Superintendent will deliberate on the matter in the absence of the parties.
- 10.2.3.6 The Superintendent will make a decision in respect of the appeal and advise the parties in writing regarding the decision and the reasons for that decision.
- 10.2.3.7 The decision of the Superintendent will be final.

#### 11. Appeal of Policies and Administrative Procedures:

If a School Council finds itself in disagreement with Board policy or administrative procedures, the School Council may write a letter to the Superintendent outlining the concerns with a copy being sent to the Principal.

Reference: Section 20, 22, 60 School Act  
School Councils Regulation 171/98  
School Councils Policy 1.8.3  
School Council Resources Manual, 1995