

Adopted December 1, 2011

HARTSDALE AVENUE SCHOOL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

Name

The name of this association shall be Hartsdale Avenue School Council, representing Hartsdale Avenue Public School, in the city of Mississauga, in the Province of Ontario, hereafter referred to as the council.

Mission statement

Hartsdale Avenue School Council supports student success in our school and community.

Purpose and objectives

Purpose: To improve student achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system by encouraging parents to actively participate in the education of their children.

Objectives:

- to follow ministry and board guidelines concerning school councils
- to place the interests of the school and its students first
- to act as an advisory body and resource to the school principal and, when appropriate, to the Board
- to share responsibility and accountability for the success of all students
- to enhance parent and community involvement in the school
- to enable the viewpoints of parents and community members to be heard
- to foster good relationships and effective consultation, collaboration and communication among home, school and community
- to provide a forum for dialogue and collaboration concerning the School Success Plan, to meet shared educational goal
- to facilitate fundraising initiatives that will augment the school's annual operating budget
- to promote positive attitudes towards the education of students and public education

Role of school council

The school council is accountable to the school community. The role of the school council shall be to:

- operate within the Education Act and its regulations, the Ministry of Education and Training guidelines and the Peel District School Board policies, operating procedures and contractual agreements. Both council and individual members can incur personal liability if they exceed their mandate.
- act as an advisory body by providing ideas and suggestions to assist the principal and, where appropriate, the school board trustees, in making decisions on educational issues. Advice provided shall be based on the general views of the school council and in the best interests of the students.

Advisory responsibilities

School council may be asked to provide advice to the principal or school board trustees on decisions that include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- determining the school activity calendar for the Board calendar year

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- the school code of behaviour and dress codes
- the school program goals, priorities and curriculum delivery
- the responses of the school or school board to achievement in provincial and boards assessment programs
- school budget priorities
- allocation of funding for school councils
- strategies for communication and reporting between the school and the community
- selection criteria and placement of principals and vice-principals
- extracurricular activities in the school
- school-based services and community partnerships related to social, health, recreation and nutritional programs
- fundraising policies
- conflict resolution policies
- reimbursement of expenses for school council members
- community use of school facilities
- local coordination of services for children and youth
- development, implementation and review of Board policies at the local level
- the establishment or amendment of Board policies and guidelines that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
- development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents
- board action plans for improvement based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of students and the communication of those plans to the public
- development of the school profile

Other duties and responsibilities

- hold a minimum of four meetings each year that are open to the public and held in a location accessible to the public
- strive to make decisions by consensus
- consult with parents to gather their views and preferences on matters under consideration by school council
- set up a communication plan, communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community and, where appropriate, ensure that communications are available in the languages of the school community
- establish goals, objectives, action plans and procedures and review them annually
- share council meeting dates, agendas and minutes with trustees
- organize information and training sessions to help members of council improve their skills as council members
- ensure that school council fundraising activities are conducted in accordance with policies established by the board and that funds raised are used for a purpose approved of by the board or authorized by board policies
- advise the principal about spending school council funds and make decisions on purchases
- prepare a financial statement for inclusion in the annual report. The financial statement must include school council activities for the entire academic year, from September 1 to August 31 inclusive.
- submit an annual report, including financial statements, to the principal and the Communications department at the HJA Brown Education Centre no later than September 30 of each school year

School council recommendations and communications

- All school council recommendations and decisions relating specifically to the school should be referred to the school principal by the school council chair or co-chairs.
- Recommendations and decisions that are broader in scope than the local school may be referred by the chair or co-chairs either to the school principal for direction or through the principal to the appropriate board official or committee. The board will consider each recommendation made by council and will advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.
- Council is responsible for setting up its own communication plan.
- Where necessary, all communications should be available in the languages of the community.
- Communications from the school council to the school community must be reviewed by the principal.

Membership

- Parents/guardians shall form the majority of the school council. All council members are equal partners and have equal rights. It is expected that the membership of the council will reflect the diversity of the school community.

Membership in the school council is governed by the Education Act *School Council Regulation 612/00 Section 3: Composition*. Membership shall include, but not be limited to:

- parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school,
 - the school principal,
 - one teacher employed at the school,
 - one support (non-teaching) staff member,
- and optionally:
- one community representative, who shall be a public school supporter.

The school council may not be less than 9 members. If council positions are vacant, the council may continue to function while efforts are made to fill the vacancies.

Limitations on council membership

A person **may not be a member** of the council if he/she is a trustee of the Peel District School Board or a local Member of Provincial Parliament.

A person **may not be a parent member** of the council if he/she is:

- employed at the school
- not employed at the school but is employed elsewhere by the board, unless he/she informs other council members of his/her employment before the council election

A person **may not be appointed to council as a community representative** if he/she is employed by the Peel board unless:

- he/she is not employed at the school, and
- the other members of the school council are informed of the person's employment before the appointment

A person may not serve as **chair or co-chair** of council if:

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- he/she is employed by the Peel District School Board

Election planning

School council shall establish a School Council Election Committee. The Committee shall ensure that elections of members are held in the first 30 days of the school year.

Appeals related to the school council elections shall be resolved by the Committee. If the situation is not resolved, the school principal and chair of the outgoing council will make a decision.

Elections

Members are elected to the school council by nomination and membership vote. Elections of school council members shall be held during the first 30 days of the school year, on a date determined by the school council chair, in consultation with the school principal.

At least 14 days before the date of the election, the principal shall give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to the parents and guardians of all students enrolled in the school.

Membership in the school council shall be determined as follows:

- *parent representatives* – elected by parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school
- *chair* – a parent/guardian member who is elected by council members
- *community representative* – appointed by council, once it is established
- *school principal* – a mandated member of council
- *teacher representative* – elected by members of the teaching staff
- *support staff representative* – elected by members of the support staff

Term of office

The term of office for elected and appointed positions is normally for two years. However, some one year terms may be permitted to allow for council continuity. The term of office for parents should be staggered so that approximately half of the members are elected each year. Members of school council may be re-elected or reappointed for more than one term.

Nomination process

Parents may nominate themselves or other parents for election. A Parent School Council Candidate Nomination Form must be completed and returned to the principal by each candidate. Candidates should be prepared to summarize their reasons for running for school council to the school community. Candidates may not use school resources to campaign for election and may not post or distribute campaign literature at the school. At least one week before the election, the principal shall make a list of candidates and a brief biography of each candidate available to all the parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school.

Voting

- A person is qualified to vote in a school council election if he/she is a parent or guardian of a student enrolled at the school.
- Elections for school council will be conducted by secret ballot. The principal shall conduct a lottery to determine the ballot order for each candidate.
- The principal shall supervise election day proceedings.

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- All eligible voters may cast one vote for each of the candidate positions. Voters must be present at the school on the election day(s), during the preset hours of the election.
- If there is a tie for a position on council, the vote will be decided by drawing lots.
- If the number of candidates is less than, or equal to, the number of positions available, the candidates will be acclaimed.

Election of non-parent council members

The principal, in consultation with the Election Planning Committee, will make arrangements for the election of all non-parent members of the school council.

Teacher representative

- Any full or part-time teachers employed at the school, other than the principal or vice-principal, may be candidates for the teacher representative position.
- Part-time employees who are assigned to more than one location may only hold one school council position.
- A person is qualified to vote in an election of a teaching member of school council if he/she is a teacher employed at the school.

Support staff representative

- Any full or part-time board employee at the school, other than the principal, vice-principal or any other teacher, may be a candidate for the support staff representative position.
- A person is qualified to vote in an election of a support staff member of school council if he/she is employed at the school and is not a teacher.

Appointments to council

Community representatives are appointed to council. Appointments to council are made by majority vote of the members at the meeting. Appointments shall be made at a public meeting with appropriate public notice of the meeting.

Vacancies

Vacancies on school council occur when:

- positions on school council have not been filled after an election
- when a member resigns
- when a member is unable to fulfill his/her duties and responsibilities

A member who fails to fulfill his/her responsibilities may, after the involvement of a facilitator, be removed by a two-thirds vote of the members of the full council.

A vacancy in the school council can be filled by holding an election or council can choose to appoint an eligible member. School council may continue to operate with a vacancy as long as there is a quorum and the majority of council members are parents

Duties and responsibilities of school council members

- attend and participate in council meetings
- fulfill their duties
- maintain a school-wide perspective

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- support the Peel board's goals for student success and the school's success plan
- act in the best interests of the school and students
- provide advice to the principal on educational issues and other areas where the council has been given advisory responsibilities
- attend and participate in information and training sessions
- encourage participation of parents and representatives from all groups in the school community
- act as a link between the school council and the community
- support and promote the decisions reached by council
- ensure that executive positions on the council are filled

Council members are expected to behave responsibly and ethically in all of their actions and deliberations, adhere to the code of ethics established by the school council and disclose any conflicts of interest, where they occur.

Council executive

School council shall have a chair or two co-chairs. The chair or co-chairs of council must be parent member(s) and must be elected by council. A person employed by the Peel District School Board may not be chair or co-chair of council. The chair or co-chairs shall be elected within 30 days of the first school council meeting.

Council may decide to have other executive members, such as a vice-chair, secretary, and treasurer, if necessary.

Meetings

A minimum of four meetings will be held during the school year. Additional meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the chair.

School council must meet within the first 35 days of the school year, after the council elections, on a date chosen by the principal of the school.

All school council meetings are open to the public and will be advertised in the school newsletter, school web site and/or special flyers. On behalf of the school council, the principal will give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the council meetings to every parent of a student enrolled at the school.

Meetings must be held at a location accessible to the public and may be held at the school.

Every council meeting should include a Public Question Period.

Quorum

A quorum is necessary to pass any motions made at the school council meetings. Without a quorum, motions may not be considered or approved. However, if the majority of parents would like the meeting to proceed without a quorum, the council may continue to discuss other topics.

A quorum exists when:

- the majority of the current members of council are present at the meeting; and
- a majority of the members of council who are present at the meeting are parent members

Committees

School council may establish committees, as required. Committee chairs shall be appointed as required.

Every council committee must include at least one parent member of the council. Committees may include people who are not members of council.

All school council committee meetings are open to the public and will be advertised in the school newsletter, school web site and/or special flyers. On behalf of the school council, the principal will give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the school council committee meetings to every parent of a student enrolled at the school. Committee meetings must be held at a location accessible to the public and may be held at the school.

Committees shall submit reports and recommendations to the council executive and shall follow directions from the executive to implement the recommendations.

Committee chairs shall make reports to meetings of council, as required.

Decision-making process

Consensus

The council will make every effort to arrive at a consensus for all decisions. Consensus is reached when all or most of the council members can accept or support the idea, concept or course of action being proposed.

Where consensus cannot be reached, council issues may be resolved through a formal vote. If a vote is necessary, all council members are equal and can vote. The vote may be by secret ballot or show of hands. A majority vote (50%+1) of those members present is required for approval. A tie vote is a loss. The principal does not have a vote in any decisions of school council or committees of school council.

Motions

Any member of the council may make a motion at any meeting, with no seconder required. A motion is approved if a majority of the council members present at the meeting vote in favour of it.

Voting

- Each member of school council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by council.
- Each member of a committee of school council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the committee.
- The principal is not entitled to vote in votes taken by school council or by a committee of school council.
- A member of council may abstain from voting on any motion.

Dispute resolution

If, at any time, four members of council are of the opinion that council has become non-productive to the point that its operation is significantly impaired, they may deliver a written petition, signed by them all, to council members and the following will apply:

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- the chair will call a special meeting of council to resolve the situation
- if a resolution is not reached at the special meeting, then the chair, in consultation with the principal, shall request assistance from the superintendent of education.

Bylaws

In accordance with government regulations, the school council shall establish by-laws governing the conduct of its affairs.

The following bylaws shall be established:

- a bylaw that governs election procedures
- a bylaw that establishes a process for filling vacancies in council membership
- a bylaw that establishes rules for participating in school council proceedings in the case of a conflict of interest
- a bylaw that establishes a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes

The council may establish other bylaws, as necessary. All bylaws must be established in accordance with board policies and guidelines.

Accounting and auditing

Minutes must be taken at all council meetings and records must be kept for all council financial transactions. A copy of meeting minutes and financial transaction records must be made available the school office for the parents and guardians of every child enrolled in the school. These documents should be available for examination at no charge and should be kept at the school for a minimum of four years. School council financial records may be subject to audit by both internal (Peel board) and external auditors.

Financial statements

The school council must prepare a financial statement that is to be included as part of the school council annual report. The annual report, including the financial statement, must be submitted to the principal and the Communications department at the HJA Brown Education Centre no later than September 30.

The financial statement shall document fundraising revenue and expenses for the previous year, for the accounting period of September 1 to August 31 inclusive, and shall be reconciled to council bank statements. The financial statements shall include:

- the opening balance (cash on hand at the beginning of the year)
- revenue collected during the year
- expenses incurred during the year
- the closing balance (cash on hand at the end of the year)

Annual report

No later than September 30 of each school year, the chair of the school council shall submit an annual report, including the annual financial statement, to the principal and the Communications department at the HJA Brown Education Centre. The annual report should include:

- a list of members
- a summary of meeting dates
- a summary of council's activities from September 1 to August 31 inclusive
- a report of any fundraising activities

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- other information which council feels is appropriate

A copy of the annual report, including the financial statement, must be made available the school office for the parents and guardians of every child enrolled in the school. The annual report should be available for examination at no charge and should be kept at the school for a minimum of four years.

Procedure for amendments

The Hartsdale Avenue School Council Constitution may be amended by submitting a proposed amendment to the council executive or to any regular council meeting. The amendment shall be recorded by the secretary as new business and publicized in the minutes.

The amendment shall be voted on at the next regular council meeting. The amendment shall become part of the constitution if it is approved by a majority vote of all members present.