



# Lockview

# School Council Handbook

APPROVED: April 24, 2024

## INTRODUCTION

Family involvement is one of the most significant factors contributing to students' success in school. School councils provide a valuable forum through which parents, guardians and other members of school communities can contribute to improving student achievement and well-being. The role of the School Council is advisory in nature, focused on forging parent/guardian/community alliances to enhance the input provided to the school on issues, thereby allowing the school to respond to its community. When parents and guardians are involved in their children's education, the level of student achievement increases, students attend school more regularly, and demonstrate more positive attitudes towards school. They are also more likely to complete high school (*Ontario Ministry of Education: School Councils, A Guide for Members, revised 2002, page 13*).

This Handbook was created for the Lockview School Council to establish by-laws and provide basic parameters for the operation of the Council and is subject to Policy and Regulations established by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training and DSBN Policies – Specifically Ontario Regulation 612/00 and Ontario Regulation 613/00 , Ontario Regulation 298, DSBN Policies: A-12: School Councils, B-03: Financial Accountability of School Generated Funds, and G-19: Fundraising / Canvassing Initiated By School.

School Councils play a valuable role as an advisory body and can help support schools by aligning their activities to compliment the following key components of high performing schools:

- **Instructional Program:** (literacy nights, math nights, supporting the arts, etc.)
- **Welcoming, Learning Environments that are Student Focused:** (Guest speakers, playground, etc.)
- **Effective/Efficient Operational Systems:** (Parking/Kiss and Ride, council constitution and structure, accounting practices, fund raising, etc.)
- **Strong Parent Community Relationships:** (Volunteer recruitment, fun fairs, meet the teacher nights, etc.)

**DSBN's Vision:** Learning and Growing Together.

**DSBN's Mission:** Our mission describes the actions we will take to reach our ideal future of Learning and Growing Together: Within a culture of care, inclusion and innovation, the District School Board of Niagara's purpose is to inspire lifelong learning and foster relationships through meaningful connections with individuals, communities and the environment.

**Lockview's Mission:** Our School Council believes that collaborative partnership among the school, the family, and the community is essential to improving student achievement and well-being and increasing a shared sense of accountability for public education.

## **Purpose and Objectives of the Council is:**

### 1. Composition of the Council is:

While all members of the Council are equal partners, parent/guardian members shall form the majority.

Membership of a Council shall include, but are not limited to:

- a) Parents/ guardians of students currently enrolled in the school;
- b) A student if possible, but at the discretion of the school administrator;
- c) A teacher assigned to the school;
- d) A support staff member if possible, assigned to the school;
- e) The school administrator (non-voting);
- f) A community representative if possible

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members:

#### **The Principal shall:**

- attend council meetings
- assist in the operation of the council
- support and promote the council's activities and financial reporting
- seek input from the council in areas identified as council priorities
- act as a resource on laws, regulations, board policies and collective agreements
- obtain and provide information required by the council to enable it to make informed decisions
- maintain regular communication with the council chair
- assist the council in communication with the school community
- assist in facilitating council decisions

#### **Council members shall:**

- make recommendations to the Principal
- place the overall interests of the school and students first
- maintain a school-wide perspective on issues
- participate in council meetings
- act as a link between the Council and the school community.
- encourage the participation of all parents/guardians and of other community members
- participate in information and training programs as necessary
- seek to reach consensus
- follow the bylaws/ roles/responsibilities as set out in Board policy, Regulation 612/00, and any forthcoming legislation

#### **The Chair of the Council shall:**

- schedule regular meetings
- ensure that the agendas are prepared
- chair council meetings
- communicate with the Principal, Vice-Chair and council members
- ensure that there is regular communication with the school community

- facilitate collaborative decision making
- share all correspondence with the Council
- in the absence of the Chair or Vice-Chair, the Principal will facilitate the council meeting

**The Vice-Chair of the Council shall:**

- assist the Chair in all the responsibilities of the Chair

**The Secretary of the Council shall:**

- record minutes of all meetings including attendance
- submit the minutes to the Principal and Chair within two weeks of each meeting for review and distribution
- in lieu of a permanent Secretary, the Council may agree to rotate the position among the members

**The Treasurer of the Council shall:**

- in consultation with the Principal, review and share an accurate record of all Council finances with a report at meetings
- report to the Chair and Principal any concerns or irregularities in the Council finances
- comply with DSNB regulations for the handling of council finances

**Sub- Committees:**

- The Council may create any committees that they deem necessary to facilitate the objectives of the Council
- Each committee shall consist of a coordinator (from the Council) and any interested parents/guardians
- The committee(s) are an extension of the Council and subject to the same guidelines and accountability as the Council
- Progress reports are to be made at Council meetings

3. Election Process for Members:

- The Principal, in collaboration with the Council, shall encourage parents/guardians on an ongoing basis to consider involvement in the Council through monthly newsletter, flyers and personal contact
- Parents/Guardians will be notified early in September of the positions available on the Council and of the election procedures
- The Principal may reach out to school communities to encourage participation and parent/guardian involvement in school councils. A sample "Candidate Form" is provided (See Appendix A)
- A deadline is set for the submission (within the first 30 days of each school year) of this prior to the first Council meeting
- If there are a sufficient number of nominees (amount to be determined by council prior to the election) to fill the positions outlined in the constitution, all qualified nominees shall be affirmed as members for the school year by the first Council meeting
- If there are an extraordinary number of forms received for the positions in the Council, and the Council deems it necessary, an election will be held
- Ballots will be made available at the Council Meeting, listing the candidates in alphabetical order, and the parents/guardians of all current students will be eligible to cast their votes. The Principal will ensure that parents/guardians have access to the ballots for 14 days prior to the election and are giving written notice of the date, time, location or means of election by secret ballot

- The votes shall be tallied by the Principal and one member of the Council who is not running in the election. Those with the highest number of votes shall be declared elected
- The names of the Members of the Council shall be communicated. (e.g., newsletter, website)

4. Election Process for special positions:

- At the September Council meeting a request to fill the Chair, Secretary, and any other special positions will be first on the agenda
- If there is only one candidate for each position, they are to be acclaimed with no vote required
- If there are two or more candidates volunteering to fill a position, the Principal and one member of Council not running in the election will facilitate a secret ballot for election of a candidate

5. Meetings:

- There will be a minimum of four meetings per school year with the option of additional meeting to be approved by the Principal
- Meetings will be open to all parents/guardians, staff, and community members
- Agendas and minutes should be provided to all members and all parents/guardians at least three school days prior to the scheduled meeting date, utilizing the most practical and effective methods of communication, considering the school website, email, newsletter, social media and/or other manner
- The duration of a council meeting will be no more than 90 minutes. After 90 minutes, the council must decide (through consensus or vote) whether to extend the length of the meeting. If it is extended, a specific time limit shall be established.

6. Decision Making:

Effort is to be made by the Council to reach consensus on recommendations to the Principal. If consensus cannot be reached, a motion can be made. It must be seconded with an opportunity to discuss, and a simple vote will be carried. Each member of Council is entitled to one vote. The Principal is not entitled to vote. In the case of a tie, the vote of the Chair breaks the tie.

If a member of Council may gain, directly or indirectly, financial benefit from a decision of the Council, that member of Council should declare a conflict of interest. Normally, the person declaring the conflict should leave the meeting for this agenda item and not participate or attempt to influence in any way the discussion regarding, or the vote on, the matter under consideration. Although not mandatory, best practice is for Councils to vote on recommendations to spend school generated funds and document the decision in the minutes.

**Considerations for planning and decision making through an equity and inclusion lens:**

- Who does this event/activity/experience include? Who does it exclude?
- How will this event/activity/experience support students' and their families' sense of belonging?
- Does this event/activity/experience pose a barrier for students or families?
- Does this event/activity/experience have a 'low entry point' so everyone can participate?
- Have you thought about the diversity of your facilitators, speakers/presenters, and content topics?
- Have you considered the identities of students and families?
- Have you considered the timing of the event and if that will be a barrier to participation?
- Does the event conflict with a day or time of religious/spiritual observance or a statutory holiday?

## 7. Conflict Resolution:

The following is a four-step approach to resolving internal conflict and other difficult matters:

- Acknowledge the conflict. As a group, acknowledge when a conflict exists and determine the source of the conflict. For example, is it related to facts? Goals? Processes? Values? Personal preferences? Beliefs? Communication?
- Plan how to deal with the conflict. Once the source of the conflict is defined, decide how to deal with it. This may be done by the chair, another individual on the council, or the entire council. (In particularly difficult times, it may be best to engage a person who has no association with the council to facilitate discussion and problem solving.) At this stage, all council members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their concerns and viewpoints.
- Provide time for discussion. The chair or whoever is facilitating the discussion should introduce the problem and ask each member for input so that the nature and source of the conflict are clear. Acknowledging each person by listening attentively sets the tone for problem solving and opens the council to a variety of solutions. Emotions should be accepted and dealt with since they are a part of conflict.
- Seek the best solution. As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time. Following the discussion, the person facilitating the discussion may use a process for building consensus to arrive at a new solution. Council members will be asked the following questions: Can you live with this solution? Will you support the solution? Depending on the nature of the conflict, it is sometimes best for council members to have time to reflect on the proposed solution, with the decision to be finalized at a future meeting.

If after following the above steps, your school council still feels strongly that the situation requires further consideration, you may contact either the Director's Office or Board and Trustee Services. The matter will be reviewed and may be directed to a staff member for action.

## 8. Communication:

Council and sub-committee meeting minutes. Agendas and Minutes shall be made available for the school community prior to the next meeting of the council.

**Lockview School Council**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am pleased to invite you to join our School Council. As a school council member, you will play an important role in ensuring the success of all students. You will also be a liaison who communicates school successes to other parents/guardians, and community members. As a member of school council, you will be able to provide meaningful input on school life. We encourage parents/guardians from all backgrounds and lived experiences to become involved.

As part of School Council, you would advise on the following areas:

- focus on improved learning for all students
- maintain a school wide perspective on issues
- represent and communicate the views of the school community
- provide input at committee meetings
- attend and participate at council and committee meetings
- become a link between the school and the community

**Our first meeting is scheduled for DATE AND TIME, LOCATION**

Please complete and return the section below or [click the link to fill the form by DATE :](#)

**I wish to declare my candidacy for a position as a parent/guardian representative on the school council.**

Name	
I am the parent/guardian of (name and grade)	
I am an employee of the Board	Yes No
Signature and Date	

I will require childcare in order to attend.

I would like to attend virtually.

Sincerely,

Principal