

For Yukon School Administrators & Teachers

*A few basics about
SCHOOL COUNCILS*



*"Remember, being a School Council member isn't about you and me,
IT'S ALL ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR STUDENT LEARNING!"*



Training and Support materials developed by the



**ASSOCIATION OF YUKON SCHOOL
COUNCILS, BOARDS & COMMITTEES**

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Alberta's Commission on Learning, *Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds. Report and Recommendations, October 2003*

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association, *School Council Resource Manual 2006*

British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, *Leadership Manual for School & District Parent Advisory Councils 2001.*

British Columbia School Trustees Association, *Key Work Resources-Improving Student Achievement through Community Engagement. 2002*

National School Boards Association, *Becoming a Better Board Member, 1996*

Yukon Department of Education information for School Councils

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Some key information that School Councils need from their School Administrator

Administrators play a key part in the advisory and decision-making role that School Council members have. They provide important information to the Council about their school's successes, challenges and status on a variety of topics--some of these are:

- enrolment
- attendance
- courses and programming
- student progress
- discipline/behaviour
- field trips
- staffing
- policy
- student transportation
- renovations and resource allocation
- progress on school growth plan goals
- community contact (incoming and outgoing)
- school events

While information and updates on some of these topics would be needed monthly, others could be reported about on a less frequent schedule. For example:

Monthly

- attendance
- discipline/behaviour
- progress on school growth plan goals
- community contact (incoming and outgoing)
- school events

First of the school year, mid-year and spring

(Note: there may be a need to have information provided and discussion held at other times on any of the following as details and situations change)

- enrolment
- courses and programming
- student progress
- field trips
- staffing
- policy
- student transportation
- renovations and resource allocation

***When School Administrators and School Councils work together
in the best interests of student engagement and success in learning,
their combined leadership is powerful!***

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A FULL TEAM

- ★ School Council members are a critical part of the community's investment in and control of their children's learning environment.
- ★ When all seats on a Council are filled, the workload can be shared.
- ★ When there is good representation, the various points of view in the school community will be brought to the table.

All 'regular' seats are open to ALL eligible community members.

Refer to Section 86(1) and 82(1) Yukon Education Act 1990

GUARANTEED REPRESENTATION

In addition to 'Regular' seats (as they are referred to in the Yukon Education Act, 1990), many Yukon School Councils have some seats that are designated as only open to First Nation citizens. These are allocated under the section 68 'Guaranteed Representation' of the legislation noted above. Filling these seats is a negotiated process between the individual First Nations and the Minister of Education.

**“The first partners in the education system are parents.
For children to succeed, parents must be
actively and positively involved in the education of their children.
Every school should have a school council that provides a strong voice
and an effective vehicle for parents and community members to be actively involved
in important decisions about their schools.”**

*from: Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds.
Report and recommendations Alberta's Commission on Learning Oct 2003*

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION: KNOW YOUR ROLE

Education in the Yukon is a partnership between governments, educators, School Councils, School Boards, parents, students and communities. Each partner has an important role to play - to be effective, the partners must collaborate. To understand the role of School Councils, it is helpful to understand the responsibilities of some of the other partners.

THE GOVERNMENT

The government is responsible for:

- ⇒ establishing minimum levels of what students must know at each grade level and upon graduation
- ⇒ establishing a uniform territory-wide base curriculum while allowing for some customization of options
- ⇒ providing equitable funding and resources so that expectations for students can be achieved, and
- ⇒ establishing the accountability measures that will ensure expectations are achieved.

It is the government who accepts and maintains the responsibility for employing sufficient and capable staff, and for providing appropriate compensation and a fair and just work environment.

THE EDUCATORS

School principals and staff are responsible for planning and delivering programs that will enable their students to meet or exceed acceptable levels of achievement. While operating within Department of Education policies, schools reflect and respond to the culture and priorities of their local communities. In addition, principals work in consultation with their staff, school councils, boards, committees, parents, students, and communities in reaching decisions.

THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

The goal of a School Council is to enhance students' learning through the cooperative efforts of parents, students, educators, government and other members in the community.

Four very important Roles of School Councils

1. **Communication**: To establish and maintain good communications between the school, parents, students and the community;
2. **Participation**: To encourage parents, students and community members to participate in education and understand their roles in supporting student learning;
3. **Monitoring**: To monitor student learning and ensure that information is shared with parents in a meaningful way (i.e. accountability measures and reporting);
4. **Accountability**: To hold the department and school administration accountable for student learning outcomes.



KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO

POWERS AND DUTIES for SCHOOL COUNCILS in **Section 113** of the Yukon Education Act:

(1) A Council shall

- (a) review, modify if necessary, and approve the school objectives, educational priorities and courses of study by grades, as prepared by the school administration, and other matters required for the effective functioning of the school;
- (b) make recommendations to the superintendent for the allocation of resources within the budget approved for the school;
- (c) participate in the selection procedures for persons to be interviewed for the position of principal and select for appointment a principal;
- (d) in consultation with the superintendent, school administration and teachers, establish a procedure for resolving disputes between schools, parents and teachers;
- (e) keep a complete and accurate report of its meetings and provide a copy to the Minister within 30 days of each meeting;
- (f) make any necessary banking arrangements;

- (g) keep a complete and accurate record of financial transactions in a form prescribed by the Minister;
- (h) approve or cause to be approved all accounts payable by a Council for payment;
- (i) establish an attendance policy for students who are enrolled in its school;
- (j) procure a corporate seal; and
- (k) prepare reports, provide information and perform any duties as may be required under this Act.

(2) A Council may

- (a) propose and offer locally developed courses of study and locally approved instructional materials subject to the approval of the Minister and this Act;
- (b) receive and spend funds pursuant to this Act;
- (c) provide advice to the Minister respecting
 - (i) the establishment of the school year and school day,
 - (ii) school closures,
 - (iii) teaching and support staff requirements,
 - (iv) transportation services,
 - (v) school renovations and capital budget for the school, and
 - (vi) school programs;
- (d) establish committees and specify the powers and duties of the committees;
- (e) establish rules and policies on any matter within its jurisdiction;
- (f) approve the allocation and expenditure of those discretionary funds allocated to the school within its budget;
- (g) direct the superintendent to evaluate a teacher, principal or other staff member and to provide a report to the Council of the evaluation, which report shall be returned to the superintendent immediately after the Council has reviewed and considered it;

(2) A Council may *(continued)*

- (h) direct the principal to evaluate a teacher and to provide a report to it of the evaluation, which report shall be returned to the superintendent immediately after the Council has reviewed and considered it;
- (i) recommend to the superintendent the dismissal, transfer, discipline or demotion of a teacher, principal or other employee in the school and provide reasons for the recommendation;
- (j) approve curricular and extra-curricular field trips of more than one day's duration; and
- (k) approve the allocation of school days for extra-curricular activities *S.Y. 1989- 90, c.25, s.113.*

NOTE:

There are many other sections of the Education Act that pertain to School Councils, their operation, rights and responsibilities.

These are available in the handout '*Education Act Reference Index for School Councils, Boards & Committees*'

INGREDIENTS OF PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Effective meetings are critical to making effective decisions.

It is a good practice to set School Council meeting dates early in the year and to publicize them regularly. Extend an invitation to students as well as neighbouring schools and other members of the community.

It is important to ensure that:

1. The purpose for the meeting is clearly understood by all participants.
2. Those who need to be there are in attendance. A quorum (majority of Council members) must be in attendance for any act or proceeding to be valid.
3. There is an agenda sent out ahead of time and it is followed.
4. There is effective leadership. (*see below**)
5. All members are prepared and have read materials sent out ahead of time.
6. Meetings start and end on time.
7. Sub-committees are set up to handle more involved issues. Sub-committee members can come to School Council with clear recommendations for action.
8. There are outcomes reached through the process of the meeting.
9. Participants know what they are to do by way of follow-up and/or actions.
10. Accurate minutes are produced as the public record of the meeting.

In general, focus on supporting student success, don't let personal issues or the concerns of individuals dominate meetings.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP—THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR/CO-CHAIRS

(note: some Councils choose to designate Co-Chairs. Whenever the term 'Chair' is used, it is to be understood that the application is for Co-Chairs as well)

- The Chair is an important role in any meeting.
- More is expected of the Chair than any other member.
- The Chair can be seen as actually working for the Council.

With this in mind, the Chair does NOT make decisions for the Council, in fact the most important responsibility of the Chair is to ensure that all members have the information needed to assist the group in discussion and assist them in decision-making.

Chairs are not 'gate-keepers', but rather information gatherers and distributors. They need to establish and maintain a meeting environment that encourages and supports participation from all members.

The Chair is most often the 'point of contact' for the school administration and the Department of Education, HOWEVER some Councils delegate different members to be called depending on the reason for the contact. Once again, the importance of sharing information appropriately is paramount.

COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF ALL MEMBERS

All members, whether elected, acclaimed or appointed need to fulfill their responsibilities as Council members as legislated in the Yukon Education Act.

Their role in representing the interests of students, parents and other community members is an important one. They need to allocate time to do some background reading, to prepare for and attend meetings, not only the regular monthly ones but others that may be necessary from time to time to deal with specific issues. They need to be open to hearing from those they represent in their community and to be able to bring forward concerns when requested and appropriate. And carrying out follow-up actions, such as letter-writing, phoning, etc. may also be involved with some issues.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO WORK TOGETHER! TO DO IT WELL:--

- ★ There is a shared understanding that the primary focus of all Council decisions must be supporting students to reach their full potential.
- ★ Everyone participates, not only the vocal ones.
- ★ Members ask questions-of parents, students, administration and staff, other community members, current and past members of other School Councils, Dept of Education staff, other organizations and even those in other jurisdictions...
- ★ People listen to each other's ideas and know their own ideas will also be heard.
- ★ Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist in the room.
- ★ Members share the responsibilities and tasks of the group.
- ★ Any situation involving a conflict of interest (either perceived or real) is declared and appropriate action is taken.
- ★ Privileged information is treated confidentially as per the Oath of Non-Disclosure.
- ★ Members share the responsibility for Council decisions, regardless of how they voted as individuals.
- ★ People include a sense of humour in their work together.
- ★ Overall, honesty, fairness and integrity guide Council operations.

