

SCHOOL COUNCILS

Alberta Education recognizes the right of parents to be involved in their children's education and for parents, community members and school staff to be involved in key decisions about the education of students. It is not the intent of this policy to restate the School Act, Department of Education Regulations or policy, but to provide guidelines for School Councils in addition to those documents.

The Board believes that a School Council is a means to facilitate collaboration among all education partners in the local school. The Board supports the establishment of a School Council at each school in the Division in accordance with the requirements of the School Act and provincial regulations. School Councils are advisory in nature and will have a role in advising and consulting with the principal on any matter relating to the school.

Specifically,

1. The mission statement of the Division identifies a distinctive vision and purpose of schooling that is built upon the values of the Catholic faith. The Board views that School Councils are important partners in ensuring these values are fostered in the daily routines and extra-curricular programs. School Councils assist by encouraging families to take active interest in the programs offered by their school.
2. All parents of students in school shall be eligible for membership in the School Council.
3. School Councils are advocates for the Catholic school community and are encouraged to maintain a liaison with the Board. The Board recognizes the Medicine Hat Catholic Schools Parent Association as an additional means to provide information to School Councils and to receive advice from School Councils.
4. The Board shall provide any School Council the right to address the Board on any issue at the request of the School Council Chair. The School Council may make a presentation at any regularly scheduled meeting of the Board, provided adequate notice is given (at least five (5) working days prior to and not including the date of the meeting).
5. Pursuant to their role, School Councils do not deliberate specific or individual personnel or student issues.
6. Each School Council shall submit to the Board by October 15 of each year, for the preceding school year, copies of:
 - 6.1 Financial statements of any money handled by the School Council;

- 6.2 A report outlining the activities of the School Council; and
- 6.3 Minutes of each meeting.
7. The Board encourages School Councils to contribute, through the principal, to newsletters and the annual report by submitting articles outlining:
- Significant accomplishments at the school;
 - Major events or projects at the school; and
 - Results of studies undertaken.
8. The Board encourages School Councils to develop school policies which address school issues and which may further elaborate on any Board policy. To make policies meaningful, before any school policy is implemented, the School Council shall:
- Ensure that the school community has been given the opportunity to have input into the policy prior to implementation (e.g. first, second and third reading similar to Board policy development);
 - Ensure that the policy has been voted upon and passed by a majority of School Council members and that the minutes have recorded the motion and the vote;
 - That when passed, the school community is adequately informed through school newsletters, School Council newsletters, or other accepted means of communication at the school level (e.g. web page) of the policy and implications for students and parents.
- Any policies developed by School Councils will be sent to the Board for information.
9. The Board may request the Minister to dissolve a School Council if the Minister is of the opinion that the School Council is not carrying out its responsibilities. The Board may request the Minister to dissolve a School Council if one of the following negative conditions prevail:
- Fraudulent, criminal or unethical behavior;
 - Internal dissension affecting morale;
 - Adversarial relationships with staff;
 - Refusal to follow the policies of the Board or to carry out its responsibilities in accordance with the School Act and Alberta Education Regulations;
 - Disruption of the educational climate; or
 - Unresolved disputes between the School Council and the principal.

10. The Board requires the principal to take all reasonable steps to establish an advisory committee for the school if the School Council is dissolved, suspended or if establishment is unsuccessful, in accordance with Alberta Education Regulations.
 - 10.1 Membership of the advisory committee shall include:
 - 10.1.1 The Superintendent
 - 10.1.2 A parent
 - 10.1.3 A teacher in the school
 - 10.2 The principal, in consultation with the advisory committee, shall establish:
 - 10.2.1 Meeting dates and locations;
 - 10.2.2 Meeting procedures; and
 - 10.2.3 Officers
 - 10.3 The advisory committee shall assume duties and functions delegated by the Board to School Councils for the remainder of the school year.
11. The Board will provide meeting space in the Board Office for the Medicine Hat Catholic Schools Parent Association whenever requested to do so.
12. Conflict Resolution and Appeal Procedures
 - 12.1 Most disputes can be resolved through open and frank discussion and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. The first step in any dispute is for the participants to identify the specific areas of concern and then to attempt to resolve them.
 - 12.2 The communication and conflict resolution channel shall be:
School Council > Principal > Superintendent > Board.
 - 12.3 When the need to hear an appeal arises, the Board shall establish a hearing date, time, and place which allows the parties to the appeal sufficient notice to prepare for the appeal.
 - 12.4 The appeal shall be heard by the Board. The Superintendent and/or designate(s) may be present to assist the Board, except in cases when it is their decision that is being appealed. In that circumstance, they shall attend to make representation to support their position.
 - 12.5 The School Council Chair and the principal will be given an opportunity to review their positions regarding the dispute and the issues surrounding the dispute. The party making application for appeal shall proceed first and be given a full and ample opportunity to raise concerns before the Board. The other party shall then be given ample opportunity to explain the party's position to the Board. The other party shall then be given ample opportunity to explain the party's position to the Board regarding the disputed matter.
 - 12.6 In the event that the Superintendent has been asked by the parties to the appeal to give a decision with respect to the disputed matter, the Superintendent shall be entitled to make representations regarding his findings and his recommendation as to resolution of the dispute to the Board.

- 12.7 Each party to the dispute shall be given ample opportunity to respond both to the concerns raised by themselves with respect to the dispute, and the Superintendent's proposed resolution of the dispute. Board members and the Superintendent or designate(s) may question the parties to clarify the facts.
- 12.8 The Board will discuss the matter in the absence of the parties and the Superintendent or designate(s).
- 12.9 The Board will make a decision in respect of the appeal and advise the parties in writing regarding the decision and the reasons for that decision. The Board decision shall be considered final.
13. As an alternate to conflict resolution and appeal procedures 12 above, third party mediation is also acceptable. The mediator shall be chosen by mutual agreement of the parties to the dispute. Costs for mediation shall be borne by the school.
14. At the beginning of each school year, during a regular meeting, each school council will review its by-laws and constitution.
15. The principal of each school will ensure that the school council by-laws and constitution are available via a link on the school website.

Legal Reference: Section 20, 22, 60, 61, School Act
School Councils Regulation 171/98
School Councils Policy 1.8.3
School Councils Resources Manual (1995)
School Councils Handbook (1999)

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