



Chateauguay Valley Teachers' Association
Association des Enseignants de Chateauguay Valley

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**A HANDBOOK FOR
SCHOOL COUNCIL
MEMBERS
2024-2025**

INTRODUCTION

“The goal of consultation at any level is to ensure that the educational system will function as harmoniously as possible. It is reasonable for teachers to expect that their views will influence the shaping of school board policies....”

“The members of the teaching personnel of each school will be consulted on the pedagogical and disciplinary administration of the school through the formation and operation of a school council.”

These clauses from the local agreement establish an institution that comes closer to achieving co-management than has been achieved by any other group of teachers in North America. It is true that, as a consultative body, it does not have the right to make decisions, which remain contractually the prerogative of the school board and its administration. However, the establishment of a council, which must be consulted, must be heard and must be answered gives teachers a potentially powerful influence on educational policies within a school.

It derives that power from several sources. It has access to administration. This is guaranteed by our collective agreement. So long as it is representative of all the teachers in the school, it is the collective voice of the people who are ultimately responsible for implementing most policies. That is its political strength. And finally, it is a forum for reasonable exchange and debate. Here, the council is only as strong as the members who comprise it. If they are individually to serve as collective spokesmen for their colleagues, they must be articulate, informed and courageous in the certainty that they are not speaking for themselves, but for the entire body of people they represent.

The school council is the only voice for the teachers in the school. It may occasionally delegate its powers of deliberation to sub-committees or, on rare occasions, a general staff meeting, but the ultimate power to make recommendations redounds to the council itself.

This booklet has been prepared with the intention of assisting school council members in the exercise of this right to participate. It has been largely collated from various chapters of the local agreement. Clause references have been included whenever material in the agreement has been referred to.

COMPOSITION OF SCHOOL COUNCIL

Number of Members	Minimum elected teacher members: 3 Maximum elected teacher members (elementary): 7 Maximum elected teacher members (secondary): 9
Election of Members	By secret ballot of all teachers in school by September 30 th
Replacement of members who resign	By secret ballot of all teachers. Procedure to be developed internally.
Representative nature of School Council	The school council should be representative as far as possible of groupings within the school (i.e.: departments, levels). It is advisable to have a range of teaching experience among council members as well.
Status of Competent Authority	The principal or his/her delegate shall be a non- voting member of school council.
Status of CVTA Rep	The CVTA rep or his/her substitute shall be a voting member of council if he/she is elected. Otherwise, he/she sits ex-officio and, like the principal, is a non-voting member with full right to participate in debate.
Status of observers	Any member of staff may attend meetings as a non-voting observer. Any member of school council may invite any person to speak to council as a resource person. If the appearance is at the request of the principal, he must give the chairman 24 hours notice; if at the request of a teacher, the chairman must give the principal 24 hours notice.

ROLES OF CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY

Appointment of Chairman	The Chairman is appointed at the first meeting of the school year from among the teacher members of School Council.
Role of the Chairman	(a) Preparation and distribution of the agenda (b) Convening of meetings (c) Convening meetings with the teaching staff to discuss School Council business (d) Presiding at meetings (e) Extending invitations to resource people (f) Corresponding on behalf of the School Council (g) Distribution of the minutes of School Council meetings to the teaching staff within seven (7) workdays
Authority of the Chairman	The Chairman derives his/her authority from the School Council. He/she should avoid speaking personally or on behalf of the behalf of the administration rather than the teachers.
Appointment of Secretary	The Secretary is appointed at the first meeting of the school year from among the teacher members of School Council.
Role of the Secretary	(a) Taking of detailed minutes of School Council meetings (b) Assuring the preparation of minutes for distribution with the help of the Chairman

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Schedule of meetings	Normally once per month
Rules of procedure	Adopted internally. While formal procedures may seem unnecessary particularly in small schools, in cases of disagreement, formal rules minimize the possibility of personal conflict. Formal rules of procedure also tend to focus debate. See appendix for basic rules of order.
Notice of meetings	Matters which are subject to compulsory consultation require notice from the principal of 5 workdays (to assure their inclusion on the agenda). This notice may be waived in emergency situations.
Voting	Recommendations require an absolute majority of the teacher-members who are present at the meeting. An internal rule establishing a quorum would prevent decisions being made by too few people.
Veto	There is no such thing. <u>The principal is a member of School Council with no right to vote but full right to participate in debate.</u> In its right to make decisions and adopt resolutions, however, School Council is sovereign. The principal may speak against a motion, but if a majority of voting members support it, it becomes the official view of the School Council and must be dealt with. If the principal rejects a recommendation of the School Council, he/she must respond with an explanation at the next meeting. School Council has the right, which it should exercise in matters of importance, to adopt a resolution demanding a written explanation in such a case.
Minutes	Accurate minutes must be kept including: (1) the date, time and location of the meeting, (2) the names of those present, including latecomers with the time of their arrival, (3) the corrections to and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, (4) accurate text of all motions whether carried or defeated, (5) the result of votes taken on each motion, (6) the time of adjournment, (7) the signature of the secretary. While minutes should record briefly and objectively the matters that were discussed, verbatim minutes are not desirable.
Time for deliberation	The competent authority must provide the voting members of School Council with a reasonable amount of time to deliberate before making recommendations on matters which are subject to compulsory consultation.
Right to written explanation if recommendations are rejected	When the principal or school board rejects a recommendation of the School Council he/she must present the reasons at the next meeting of the School Council. The School Council has the right to adopt a resolution (motion) demanding a written explanation. It should not hesitate to do so.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION BY THE SCHOOL COUNCIL

Referral of topics to the School Council	<p>The principal must consult School Council on any matter which concerns the pedagogical or disciplinary organization of the school.</p> <p>Furthermore, any existing policies relating to the pedagogical or disciplinary organization of the school which are opposed by School Council must be reviewed by the principal.</p> <p>Any teacher or the competent authority may refer to the School Council any matter which comes within its terms of reference, unless such a matter would be more appropriately dealt with by having recourse to the grievance procedure of the Collective Agreement.</p>
Mandatory consultation on request of School Council	<p>If the School Council requests it, the principal must report on school budgets, providing information on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Transferability between accounts, 2) purpose of accounts, 3) methods of purchasing, 4) global (school) and specific (per capita) budgetary amounts available for all accounts as well as expenditures from those accounts in the previous school year, 5) amounts allocated for education equipment and amounts spent the preceding year, 6) balances remaining in accounts at least twice during the year, 7) approximate amounts in projected budgets for the next year (by May 30). <p>Items 1-3 above should be dealt with at the first meeting of council. Items 4 and 5 should be provided within 15 days after the principal receives the information. The request for this information should be made as a matter of course at the first meeting in September.</p>
Mandatory consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) the emergency substitution plan (2) pupil supervision (timetable) (3) the preliminary distribution of class numbers (4) the provisional re-organization of class numbers (5) preparation of school programs (6) distribution of pedagogical duties and responsibilities of teachers and staff assistants (7) application of new teaching methods (8) establishment of budgetary priorities (9) educational objectives of the school (10) organization of student activities (11) integration of teaching members to staff (12) reception and criteria for distribution of student teachers (13) intent and application of school regulations (14) organization of professional (pedagogical) days (15) parent-teacher relations (16) guidelines governing school closing for uninhabitable conditions (17) modalities for assuring effective supervision (18) equitable distribution of elementary supervision (19) exploration of alternatives to split classes at the elementary school (20) system of rotation for high school supervision (21) the school organizational plan
Report Preparation Days	<p>Recognizing that summative evaluation is an important part of the teacher's workload, the Union and the School Board shall negotiate the placement of four (4) pedagogical days to be designated for the preparation of reports via the EPC on a yearly basis. These negotiations must be finalized no later than March 1. These days shall be used by teachers for the preparation of the reports prescribed by the MELS in order to meet the October 15, November 20, March 15, and July 10 deadlines. The administration of the school may choose to convene</p>

	<p>teachers for a maximum of two (2) hours on the first report preparation day of the year and a maximum of one (1) hour, on the three (3) subsequent days. These meetings must take place at the beginning of the work day.</p> <p>NB: School Council no longer has to ask for these days, they are placed by the Union and the Board in the school calendar. The last report prep day of the school year is the first pedagogical day following the St-Jean-Baptiste holiday in June. Therefore, teachers do not have to have their report cards finished until the end of that workday.</p>
Recourse to grievance	All topics which constitute the matters for mandatory consultation must be discussed by Council. Failure to do so by either party constitutes a breach of the collective agreement. It is recommended that grievances be initiated when the designated authority fails to consult on subjects where she is required to do so. It is the only protection we have to ensure the terms of the collective agreement are respected.
Personal Problems	Where a problem of one teacher or a small group of teachers is of general concern to the efficient running of the school, it may be discussed by School Council. However, School Council should not discuss the personal complaints from or against a teacher. School Council is not the place for settling personal problems which should be solved by the administration or through recourse to grievance procedures.
Trivia	<p>Far too often in School Councils, an inordinate amount of time is taken up discussing minor or irrelevant subjects. This invariably detracts from the time available to discuss the important issues. While it is the right of the principal or any teacher to bring any topic to School Council, there are a number of means to ensure School Council is not trapped in the discussion of trivial topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Council can refer the question to a sub-committee or to one member of Council for investigation. 2. School Council can refer the question to the principal. 3. School Council can pass a resolution stating that the subject is beyond the purview of its mandate.

RELATION OF SCHOOL COUNCIL TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TEACHING STAFF

Responsibility of School Council to the teaching staff	<p>The teaching staff of each school elects the teacher members of School Council. The teacher members of Council are therefore clearly and directly responsible to the staff. This implies that if the staff feels their elected representatives are not carrying out their responsibilities, then the staff has the right to rescind their mandate.</p> <p>Too often in School Councils, the flow of opinion within School Council is principal to Council to staff instead of the reverse. Council members should always keep in mind that they were elected to explain the thinking of the teachers they represent, not to explain the positions of the principal.</p>
Responsibility of the teaching staff to School Council	The staff has a responsibility to its elected representatives in Council that they must inform their representatives of their views, participate in meetings to discuss Council business, and take the time to read the information sent out by School Council.
Consulting with and reporting to the teaching staff	<p>The deliberations of Council should be reported to staff on a regular basis. In addition to the distribution of minutes and notices, a regular meeting of teachers should be held to discuss upcoming topics and report on deliberations. <u>This meeting of teachers should not be confused with a staff meeting called by the principal.</u> It is a meeting of the staff with the teacher members of Council, and should be chaired by the Chairman of Council or a substitute.</p> <p>It is important that the independence of one of the partners in the consultative process-- teachers--be maintained to ensure a true partnership in the educational decision-making process. Administration members of School Council should not be invited to these meetings so that staff members feel free to express all their problems and feelings. <u>Failure</u></p>

	<u>to hold regular meetings to sound out staff opinion weakens the Council and therefore weakens the consultative process.</u>
Preparation for School Council meetings	It is advisable that teacher members of the Council meet together in a caucus prior to the official meeting of the council. This preparatory meeting can include the discussion of perceived staff opinion, study of the documentation for the meeting, discussion of the order of the agenda, etc. <u>Remember, this type of preparation for the meeting is always done by the administration, and teacher representatives should be as well prepared.</u>
Division of labour	It is advisable to have different teacher members of Council share the workload on different subject or duties in School Council. The division of labour increases expertise and lightens the burden on each Council member. Possible divisions of labour are: a) by subject: staffing, budget, learning materials, curriculum, pedagogical day activities, parent relations, library and a-v services, etc. b) by task: chairman, secretary, organizer of staff consultation meetings, organizer of council caucus, preparation of documentation, consulting of staff, etc.

RELATION OF SCHOOL COUNCIL TO THE BOARD AND THE CVTA

Relations with the Board	A Council should keep itself informed of the decisions of the School Board by requesting the summary or a copy of the School Board minutes. Very often, the Board establishes committees on various topics which Council members should be aware of and whose reports it should study.
Relations with Board-level Consultative Committees	The Collective Agreement has established an educational policies committee as an independent, investigative committee composed of teachers and administrators in equal number. In most cases the matters considered by the committee are directly related to what is going on in schools. The work of both the EPC and the School Council is facilitated by contact between the two bodies. For example, the EPC could request councils to do research for or report to it.
Relations with the Governing Board	A Council should keep itself informed of the decisions of the Governing Board by requesting the summary or a copy of the Governing Board minutes. School Council shall be the body through which teachers collaborate in the development of proposals by principals in accordance with articles 85 and 86 of the Education Act and shall be the vehicle for teachers to present proposals to the principal in accordance with article 96.15 of the Education Act, unless an alternate procedure is developed at a general meeting of the teaching staff in accordance with article 89 of the Education Act.
Relations with the CVTA	The CVTA representative on Council is the official liaison with the union. Where problems arise between staff and/or Council members and the administration, it is recommended that CVTA be contacted. In addition we hope that the following means of CVTA-Council communication will be continued: a) the sending of Council minutes to CVTA. It is important for us follow the work of your Council. It is also an important means for us to keep in contact with the school; b) a regular workshop for School Councils organized by CVTA, including the distribution of this handbook; c) the notification by CVTA of impending education policy so that School Councils can benefit from the necessary documentation and information.

APPENDIX A: **BASIC RULES OF ORDER**

How to record a motion:

A motion is a proposal that:

1. the assembly take a certain action;
2. the assembly express itself as holding certain views.

A member moves that:

- a resolution be adopted, or
- a resolution be amended, or
- a resolution be referred to a committee, or
- a motion be tabled (not dealt with today)

The merits of the motion are debated.

A vote is taken. In most cases, a simple majority transforms the motion into a resolution, which expresses the will of the assembly.

Amendments: An amendment to a motion must be moved and seconded. It is debated and voted upon before the main motion.

Tabling a motion: If a member feels that insufficient information is available, or that she is not ready to take a position, she may move to table a motion. This motion must be seconded and may be adopted or defeated. The motion may be lifted from the table (i.e., discussed again) at any time, as long as a motion to do so has been moved, seconded and adopted.

Putting the Question: If a member of Council feels that there has been enough debate on a motion, providing that she has not been the last to speak to it, she may move that the question be “put” (i.e., voted on). This motion to put the question if seconded is voted on immediately and, if it is carried, the main motion is voted on without further debate.

APPENDIX B:
STANDARD AGENDA

NOTICE OF MEETING

A regular meeting of the _____ School Council will be held on (Date) at (Time) in (Place).

1. Approval of agenda (with additions?)
2. Approval of minutes of last meeting (with additions or corrections)
3. Business arising from the minutes of the last meeting
 - a) correspondence
 - b) action on motions
 - c) any other business
4. New Business
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
5. Date of next meeting (Date? Call of the Chair?)
6. Adjournment

Please bring the following documentation: This agenda
Anything else distributed in advance

APPENDIX C:
SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL

THIS IS A NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST FOR DISCUSSION.

ANY OTHER ITEMS DEEMED IMPORTANT BY THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COUNCIL
SHOULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED.

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>CLAUSE</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
September	4-2.14	Elect chairman and secretary
	4-2.15	Establish rules of procedure
	5-11.08	Discuss uninhabitable conditions
	4-2.12	Accounts and budgetary information
	8-11.02,8 - 11.03	Equitable distribution of duties
	8-11.07	High school supervision rota
	5-11.01	System of notification of absences
	4-2.08	Reporting procedures
November		School closing procedures
March	4-2.08	Establish Budgetary priorities for next school year
		Preliminary distribution of class numbers (groupings)
		Teaching Staff Needs
		Subject-Time Allocation (Basic School Regulation)
April		
May	5-21.09	
June	4-2.04	Elections
	4-2.08	Supervision system Review school rules