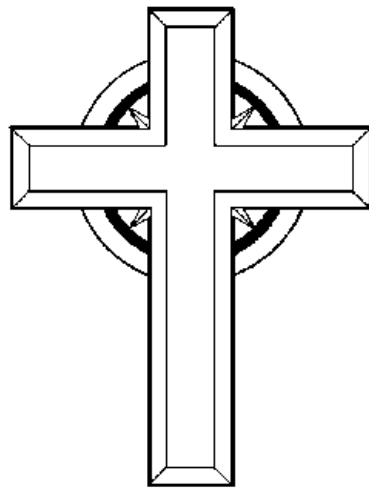


Section 4

**CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL
ROLES**



*“We have gifts that differ according to
the Grace given to us.”*

Romans 12:6

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

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SECTION 4: CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL ROLES

INTRODUCTION

Catholic School Councils are a gift to the Catholic school community. These councils are a structure within which parents, staff, students, parish, and Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) representatives are afforded the opportunity to exercise their own vocation as parents and people of faith.

Catholic School Councils have the opportunity to influence educational and faith formation experiences as children journey towards realizing the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations and ultimately, a vocation of Christ-like service in the world beyond school. As a body representing children's first educators in the faith, the board and school principals can gain valuable insights from Catholic School Councils into the cultivation of truly authentic Catholic education and faith formation experiences for children (i.e. Pastoral plans, sacramental preparation, virtue formation, social justice initiatives, school-based services and community collaborations related to the spiritual/faith life of the school, etc.).

PURPOSE

Catholic School Councils are formed in accordance with the Ministry of Education, Government of Ontario, in the form of Ontario Regulation 612/00, which outlines the requirement to establish school councils, Ontario Regulation 298 Operations of Schools, and the Education Act, Section 265, which outlines the duties of principals.

The Catholic School Council operates under the auspices of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and adheres to Regulations 612/00 and 298, the Education Act, section 265 and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board applicable policies and procedures.

As per Ontario Regulation 612/00, the purpose of a school council is, through the active participation of the parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians.

In addition to the purpose of school councils as identified in Ontario Regulation 612/00, the mission of Catholic School Councils in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, is to promote the vision, values and sacramental life of Catholic practices of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and the Catholic community it serves, and advise the Principal and board.

The Catholic School Council, guided by policies, procedures, beliefs and practices of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, shall identify problems and concerns

within the school environment and work collaboratively to develop strategies and solutions to enhance the faith formation, overall development and educational experiences of all students. The Catholic School Council shall promote and maintain a positive, faith-infused school environment for all students and staff; facilitate the active and meaningful participation of parents, and all members of the school community, and provide staff, parents, and students with an accountable system to which they can voice their concerns, comments and suggestions for enhancing the faith, well-being and academic improvement of the school community.

The Catholic School Council's primary means of achieving its purposes is by making recommendations in accordance with Ontario Regulation 612/00 to the principal of the school and to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL

Members of a Catholic School Council must be cognizant of their responsibility to promote the vision, values, sacramental life and Catholic practices of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and the Catholic community, which the school council serves. By maintaining a school-wide focus on all issues, the Catholic School Council helps to nurture faith formation, improve pupil achievement and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents within.

Council members shall always act in the best interest of the school and its students. Operating in a non-judgmental manner, with respect for confidentiality of parents, students and staff is very important. Catholic School Councils play a positive role in helping to improve the school's communication with the school community, support school-based services and community collaborations, and advise the board and the principal in the areas of planning, goal-setting and the implementation of programs.

CONSULTATION

Catholic School Councils shall, within the parameters prescribed in the Education Act, the Regulations thereunder, and the policies and procedures of the board, provide advice to the school principal and to the school board on any matters. The board/principal shall consider any recommendations made and shall advise the council on the action taken by the board/school in response to the recommendations.

Consultation by Board

In addition to its other obligations to solicit the views of school councils under the Education Act, the board shall solicit the views of Catholic School Councils established by the board with respect to the following matters:

1. The establishment or amendment of board policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents including policies and guidelines respecting,
 - a. the conduct of persons in schools within the board's jurisdiction,
 - b. appropriate dress for pupils in the schools within the board's jurisdiction,
 - c. the allocation of funding by the board to school councils,
 - d. the fundraising activities for school councils,
 - e. conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes,
 - f. reimbursement by the board of expenses incurred by members and officers of school councils.
2. The development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including implementation plans for policies and guidelines respecting:
 - a. the conduct of persons in schools within the board's jurisdiction, and
 - b. respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
3. Board action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public.
4. The process and criteria applicable to the selection and placement of principals and vice-principals.

Subsections 1- 4 do not limit the matters on which a board may solicit the views of Catholic School Councils.

Consultation by Principal

In addition to his or her other obligations to solicit the views of the Catholic School Council under the Act and regulations, the principal of a school shall solicit the views of the Catholic School Council with respect to the following matters:

1. The establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
 - a. a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
 - b. school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
2. The development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including implementation plans for,
 - a. a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and

- b. school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
3. School action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public.

Subsections 1-3 do not limit the matters on which the principal of a school may solicit the views of the Catholic School Council on. The principal of the school may solicit the views of Catholic School Councils with respect to the following matters:

1. The faith development of the school community (i.e.; prayer, pastoral plan, faith plan, sacramental preparation, social justice initiatives, virtue formation),
2. School budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans for submission to the board,
3. School-community communication strategies,
4. Methods of reporting to parents and the community,
5. Extra-curricular activities in the school,
6. School-based services and community collaborations related to spiritual, social justice, social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs,
7. Local coordination of services for children and youth aligned to board practice.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCILS

Keep minutes of all of its meetings and records of all of its financial transactions for a period of seven (7) years. The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person.

Submit a written report on its activities of the Catholic School Council to the principal of the school and to the board prior to the end of its term. The annual report shall include a report on any fundraising activities that the council engaged in. The principal shall, on behalf of the Catholic School Council, give a copy of the report to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the copy is given, is enrolled in the school and shall be posted in a location accessible to parents.

Establish its goals, priorities, and procedures.

Organize faith formation, information and training sessions to enable members of the council to support the faith formation and skills as council members.

Communicate regularly with parents and other members of the community to seek their input with regard to matters being addressed by the Catholic School Council, and to report on the activities of the council to the school community.

Promote the best interests of the school community.

Consult with parents of students enrolled in the school about matters under its consideration.

Ensure that funds, if any, are raised and used in accordance with board policies and procedures, and for purposes approved by the board.

DUTIES OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Principal

The principal shall be a designated member of the Catholic School Council.

Duties

The duties of the principal as relates to school councils, are identified in:
Ontario Regulation 612/00 School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees, Ontario Regulation 298 Operation of Schools.
Board Policy 4.01 Catholic School Councils.

The principal shall:

1. Promote the vision, values and sacramental life and Catholic practices of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.
2. Attend every meeting of the school council, unless he or she is unable to do so by reason of illness or other cause beyond his or her control.
3. Act as a resource person to the Catholic School Council and assist the Catholic School Council in obtaining information relevant to the functions of the council, including information relating to relevant legislation, regulations and policies.
4. Collaborate with the Chair/ Co-Chair to ensure that the council is conversant with and makes decisions through the lens the Catholic virtues and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.
5. Post any materials distributed to members of the Catholic School Council in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.
6. Make the names of the members of the Catholic School Council known to the parents of the pupils enrolled in the school, by publishing those names in a school newsletter or by such other means as is likely to bring the names to the attention of the parents.
7. Provide for the prompt distribution to each member of the Catholic School Council of any materials received by the principal from the Ministry of Education that are identified by the Ministry of Education as being for distribution to the members of the council.

8. Consider each recommendation made by the Catholic School Council and advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.

In addition to his or her other obligations to solicit the views of the Catholic School Council under the Act and the regulations, the principal of a school may solicit the view of Catholic School Councils on any matter but shall solicit the views of the Catholic School Council with respect to the following matters:

1. The establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
 - a. a local code of conduct established governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
 - b. school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
2. The development of implementation plans for new education initiatives that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including implementation plans for,
 - a. a local code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in the school, and
 - b. school policies or guidelines related to policies and guidelines established by the board respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction.
3. School action plans for improvement, based on the Education Quality and Accountability Office's reports on the results of tests of pupils, and the communication of those plans to the public.

In addition to the matters listed above, the principal of the school may solicit the views of Catholic School Councils with respect to the following matters:

1. The faith development of the school community (i.e.; prayer, pastoral plan, virtue formation, sacramental preparation, etc.),
2. School budget priorities, including local capital improvement plans for submission to the board,
3. School-community communication strategies,
4. Methods of reporting to parents and the community,
5. Extra-curricular activities in the school,
6. School-based services and community collaborations related to spiritual, social justice, social, health, recreational, and nutrition programs,
7. Local coordination of services for children and youth aligned to board practice.
8. Manage the collection, accounting and depositing of fundraising dollars with the Catholic School Council.

OFFICES

Chair/Co-Chair

A Catholic School Council shall have a chair, or if the by-laws of the council so provide, two co-chairs. Vacancies shall be filled in accordance with the by-laws of the council.

The Chair/Co-chair shall be officers of the Catholic School Council.

The Chair or Co-chair must be a parent member of the council and shall be elected by the members of the council.

A person who is employed by the board cannot be the chair or co-chair of the council.

Duties of Chair/Co-Chair

The Chair/Co-Chair of the Catholic School Council shall:

1. Always be a member of the school parent community,
2. Be a full voting member,
3. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
4. Call and set dates for all Catholic School Council planning sessions and meetings in consultation with the school principal and Catholic School Council members,
5. Prepare the agenda for Catholic School Council meetings in consultation with the principal and members of the council,
6. Chair all council planning sessions and meetings. The Chair can ask a parent member to chair meetings in his/her absence if Co-Chair is unavailable.
7. Set the Catholic context for meetings by including a prayer, relevant faith news, information and/or announcements,
8. Collaborate with the principal to ensure that the council is conversant with and makes decisions through the lens of the Catholic virtues, practices and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations,
9. Ensure that the minutes of the Catholic School Council meetings are recorded and maintained,
10. Provide the Chairperson's report to the Catholic School Council at all meetings of the council,
11. Act as a signing officer for cheque requisitions and deposit forms (if applicable),
12. Be a sitting member of the council budget committee (if applicable),
13. Participate in faith development, information and training programs,
14. Communicate with the school principal,
15. Ensure that there is regular communication with the school community,
16. Consult with senior board staff and trustees, as required,
17. Provide leadership to the members of the School Council, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their roles and mandate.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be elected by members of the Catholic School Council.

Duties of Treasurer

The Treasurer:

1. Be a full voting member,
2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. May act as one of the approved signing officers on the Catholic School Council Cheque Requisition General Form. Signing authority for school council bank accounts will be with school staff only,
4. Shall count and verify the funds received for deposit immediately in the presence of the person(s) giving the funds and complete the Catholic School Council Funds Received General Form). All deposits to the Catholic School Council bank account will be the responsibility of the Catholic School Council who will provide a copy of the deposit slip to the designated individual in the school. Collection, accounting and depositing of fundraising dollars are managed by School Council and the principal. The designated individual will record the deposit into SchoolCash.NET as a lump sum under the categories specified by Catholic School Council,
5. Shall follow Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board general administration procedures outlining standardized procedures and accompanying general forms (e.g. Cheque Requisition and Funds Received forms),
6. Shall provide ongoing financial bank reconciliation and/or financial/accounting report to the Catholic School Council and parent community,
7. Shall chair and manage the Catholic School Council budget committee (if applicable),
8. Shall provide a year-end financial statement for the Catholic School Council Annual Report,
9. Shall ensure all financial reports are held in the minute's binder in the main office to provide full public access. Note: All financial reports shall be held at the school for a period of seven (7) years.

Secretary

The secretary shall be elected by members of the Catholic School Council.

Duties of the Secretary

The secretary shall:

1. Be a full voting member,
2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Record the proceedings of all Catholic School Council meetings,

4. Maintain a complete set of Catholic School Council minutes and all legal and important documents. Ensure all documents are held in the minute's binder in the main office to provide full public access. Note: All documents shall be held at the school for a period of seven (7) years,
5. Distribute minutes and agendas for all School Council meetings to all pertinent parties in a timely manner,
6. Post all minutes and meeting notices in the designated area of the school,
7. Assist the Chair in the writing and sending of any necessary correspondence,
8. Act as assistant to the Chairperson,
9. Distribute minutes to members 2 days before the meeting along with agenda. Ensure that the Chairperson or co-chairs establish quorum before meetings begin. Quorum is 50% or more of parent members.

Other Council Officers

The Catholic School Council may have such other officers as are provided for in its by-laws.

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Parish Representative

The Parish representatives serve as a communication link between the Parish and the Catholic School Council with respect to Parish events relating to the school. The individual that belongs to one of the following categories may serve as the Parish representative: Priest, Deacon, a parent of a child attending the school who is a member of the Parish in the school region, member of the Parish who is not a parent of a child attending the school, a Community representative on the Catholic School Council who is a member of the Parish, or Chaplain (Secondary Schools only). The Catholic School Council, as the governing body, should make the final decision on who shall be appointed as the Parish representative. However, for the appointment, a consultative approach with the Parish Priest is recommended. In the case where a school is associated with more than one Parish, the Parish representative shall be from the Parish designated to the school.

As the Parish representatives are there to help the Priest, the Priest is encouraged to recognize the representative with other ministries at the beginning of the school year and perhaps consider having a commissioning period at a Sunday Mass.

The Parish representative shall be appointed by the Catholic School Council in accordance with B2.10

Duties of the Parish Representative

1. Be a full voting member,

2. Regularly attend and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Provide input into the school's pastoral/faith plan,
4. Provide guidance and support to the Catholic School Council relating to the faith formation of members of the school community and initiatives/issues in the parish community,
5. Serve as communication link between the parish and the Catholic School Council with respect to parish information (i.e. local church locations, Mass times, annual parish events, available social outreach programs and organizations such as the Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus, youth ministries and prayer groups) and provide regular updates,
6. Be a member of the Catholic School Council Faith Development Committee (if applicable),
7. Provide guidance and support to the Catholic School Council concerning faith development initiatives/activities which enhance the Catholic education and faith formation of students,
8. Provide encouragement and support for Sacramental preparations,
9. Prepare and conduct prayer/reflection at meetings including the preparation of a sacred space,
10. Promote and support social outreach programs,
11. Arrange Mass cards and sympathy cards on behalf of council,
12. Write articles for Parish newsletter,
13. Lead spiritual discussion at meetings,
14. Participate in other activities that strengthen the Catholic faith formation in the school.
15. Act as a communication link to provide resources from the Pastor/Church to the school. Contact the parish prior to council meetings to relay any information to be shared with the school council and parents (i.e. Church events, sacraments/celebrations, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, how to become an altar server, rallies and symposiums, etc.),
16. Provide the Parish Priest with a copy of the minutes of Catholic School Council meetings and communicate/invite the Priest to Catholic School Council upcoming events or functions,
17. Attend Dufferin-Peel CDSB Annual Parish Representatives' Forum,
18. Establish and maintain communication with the Parish Priest affiliated with the school to ensure clarity of expectations and goals.

Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education Representative (OAPCE)

The OAPCE representative shall be appointed by the Catholic School Council in accordance with the by-laws.

Duties of OAPCE Representative

The OAPCE representative shall:

1. Be a full voting member,

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2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Represent the OAPCE as the voice of the association on the Catholic School Council,
4. Report to the council the information shared by OAPCE at all meetings,
5. Attend the Dufferin-Peel Regional Council meetings and the Annual General Meeting of OAPCE when able.

Student Representative (Secondary only)

The student representative shall be appointed by the Student Parliament.

Duties of the Student Representative

The student representative shall:

1. Be a full voting member on the council,
2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Provide ongoing student representation and take part in all discussions.
4. Relay information to the members of the council from the Student Parliament and vice versa,
5. Forward a written report to the teacher representative if unable to attend the council meeting or send a delegate.

Additional Community Representative (optional)

Catholic School Councils may establish a by-law to increase the number of appointed community representatives. Note: In specifying the number of community representatives, the Catholic School Council shall ensure that parent members constitute a majority of the members of the council. Additional community representatives shall be appointed by the Catholic School Council.

Duties of Additional Community Representatives

Additional Community Representatives shall:

1. Be a full voting member on the council,
2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Endeavour to build partnerships and links between the school and the community.

Catholic School Council Members

Duties of Catholic School Council Members

Catholic School Council members shall:

1. Be full voting members,

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2. Regularly attend, and participate in Catholic School Council meetings,
3. Maintain a school-wide focus on all issues. Catholic School Council meetings are not a forum for discussion about individual parents, students, staff, trustees or other council members,
4. Participate in faith development, information and training programs,
5. Act as a link between the Catholic School Council and the school community,
6. Encourage the participation of parents from all groups and of other people within the community.

COMMITTEES

The Catholic School Council may adopt the practise of establishing committees when necessary. Committees usually conduct more detailed work than is possible for the council. Committees must have at least one council member on the team, who keeps the council informed of the developments and accomplishments of the committee. This communication is usually conducted through one or more members on the council. Committees are a very positive way for the Catholic School Council to reach its goals, involve more members of the community in activities and increase communication to a wider population.

Usually, members of committees will develop an interest to become more involved and may choose to join the school council when appropriate. Committees may be long standing, which means they have a permanent status and implement the council's business and programs, or ad hoc and are established to address short-term needs.

Examples of committees might be:

Sacramental Recognition
PRO-Grant Committee

Guest Speaker Programs
Accommodation Committee

Traffic/Safety Committee
Volunteer Training & Recruiting
Pancake Day
School Dance
Adult Faith Development
Writing Contest

By-Laws Writing Team
Hot Lunch/Pizza Days Committee
Talent Show Committee
Volunteer Committee
Website Committee

LIABILITY

The contribution of Catholic School Councils to the school community and to the school board is recognized by and covered within the board's liability insurance. This extends coverage to members of school councils who act within the scope of their duties in accordance with Board policies and regulations. Members of Catholic School Councils may be personally liable if they go beyond the role of the Catholic School Council or do not follow Ministry and/or Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board policies and regulations.

CODE OF ETHICS

One of the main functions of the Catholic School Council is to promote the vision, values, sacramental life and Catholic practices of the Catholic District School Board. In keeping with this tenant, it is important for members of Catholic School Councils to:

1. Consider the best interest of all students.
2. Be guided by the gospel values and Catholic virtues.
3. Be guided by the school's and the school board's mission statements.
4. Act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a school council, as identified by the school's operating guidelines, the school board, and the Ontario Ministry of Education.
5. Become familiar with the school's policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.
6. Maintain the highest standards of integrity.
7. Recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.
8. Treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.
9. Encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
10. Acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the council.
11. Not disclose confidential information.
12. Limit discussions at Catholic School Council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
13. Use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.
14. Promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community.
15. Declare any conflict of interest.
16. Not accept any payment or benefit financially though Catholic School Council involvement.

For more information about this topic, please refer to section 5.5 (Code of Ethics) of the Ontario Ministry of Education Handbook "School Councils – A Guide for Members".
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Catholic School Council members must be independent and impartial in carrying out their duties. Each member of the Catholic School Council shall avoid situations that could result in an actual, potential, or perceived conflict between the overall goals and vision of the Catholic School Council and a personal or pecuniary interest in that of a Catholic School Council member.

A conflict of interest for a Catholic School Council member is any situation in which the individual's private interests may be incompatible or in conflict with his or her

Catholic School Council responsibility. A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived or potential.

Actual: When a Catholic School Council member has a private interest that is sufficiently connected to his or her duties and responsibilities as a council member that it influences the exercise of these duties and responsibilities.

Perceived: When reasonably well-informed persons could reasonably believe that a Catholic School Council member has a conflict of interest, even where, in fact, there is no real conflict of interest.

Potential: When a Catholic School Council member has a private interest that could affect his or her decision about matters proposed for discussion.

Catholic School Council members shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families, or business entities in which they may have an interest, stand to benefit either directly or indirectly by decisions of the Catholic School Council.

A member shall exclude him/herself from discussions in which:

1. A conflict of interest is likely to result;
2. The member's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities as a member of the Catholic School Council may be jeopardized;
3. The council member, his or her relatives, or a business entity in which the member may have an interest, may gain or benefit either directly or indirectly as a result of actions that may be taken by the Principal or Board in response to advice that the council provides to the Principal or the Board.

A member of the Catholic School Council shall not accept favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the school.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A Catholic School Council shall include in its bylaws, procedures to address and achieve "conflict resolution". Where conflict amongst members of a Catholic School Council impacts the safe, efficient, and manageable operation of the school council and the school, procedures must be put in place to address and resolve the conflict. At all times, the principal will be involved in this process. The method of conflict resolution must be conducted in the spirit of Catholic values with a goal to continue the valuable work of the Catholic School Council.

Catholic School Council members are elected and appointed to serve the school community and will demonstrate respect for their colleagues on council at all times.

Where conflict amongst Catholic School Council members impacts the safe, efficient, and manageable operation of the School Council the following procedures will take place:

1. If a council member or members become disruptive during a meeting, the chair shall ask for order,
2. If all efforts to restore order fail or the disruptive behaviour continues, the chair may direct the individual to leave the meeting, citing the reason for the request,
3. If order cannot be restored the meeting can be adjourned and reconvened at a future date,
4. The removal of the member for one meeting does not prevent the council member from participating in future meetings on council,
5. The incident shall be recorded and submitted to the Superintendent of Schools within one week of the meeting,
6. When the chair has requested the removal of a member, the chair shall request that the disputing members of council participate in a special meeting, the purpose of which will be to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting may be a private meeting and shall not be construed as a meeting of the council. The Principal must be present,
7. The Chair, Principal or Superintendent may request the intervention of an independent third party to serve as a facilitator to assist in achieving a resolution to the dispute,
8. Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement,
9. If the Chairperson (co-chairs) and another member of the Catholic School Council are involved in the conflict, the Principal and the Vice-Chair will assume the responsibility for the mediation,
10. This method of conflict resolution must be conducted in the spirit of Catholic values with a goal to continue the valuable work of the Catholic School Council.

Recognizing conflict is important. Signs of potential conflict:

1. Sending unauthorized information home to parents on behalf of council,
2. Verbal abuse of council members or the chair,
3. Harassment of council members or the chair,
4. Constantly interrupting speakers, interjecting derogatory comments,
5. Breach of Code of Ethics,
6. Raising personal issues at a meeting (discussing an individual child's educational problems),
7. Misuse of or distribution of Catholic School Council members personal contact information.

All of these behaviours jeopardize attendance at meetings and discourage potential member from seeking positions on council. As a result, the council risks losing its credibility and the confidence of the school community.

The facilitator should use the four-step approach to resolving conflict:

1. **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?
2. **Plan how to deal with the Conflict.** Once the source of the conflict is defined, decide how to deal with it. The chair, another individual on the council, or the entire council, may do this. In particularly difficult times, it may be best to engage a person who has no association with the council to facilitate discussions and problems solving. At this stage, all council members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their concerns and viewpoints.
3. **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 part of the conflict. Seek the best solution. As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time.
4. **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 to following questions: Can you live with this solution? Will you support the solution?

If the facilitator and superintendent are unable to resolve the conflict and or the Catholic School Council member(s) don't adhere to the solution or to the Catholic School Council Code of Ethics outlined below, the following actions can be taken:

1. The Catholic School Council member(s) may choose to submit a letter of resignation to the school council. A template is provided in Section 3.
2. The facilitator and or superintendent, in consultation with Catholic School Council members, may send a letter to the School Council member(s) requesting that their term of office be terminated for that school year only.

CHECKLIST FOR EFFECTIVE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCILS

"When a process makes people feel that they have a voice in matters that affect them, they will have a greater commitment to the overall enterprise and will take greater responsibility for what happens to the school."

Source: Adapted from Seymour B. Sarason

Use the following checklist to evaluate whether or not your Catholic School Council is on the right track in keeping with your mission.

- We remain student-centred with high expectations for all students.
- We share a collective vision encompassing the goals and dreams of students, parents/guardians, staff administration, and community members.
- We actively support the faith formation needs, Catholic practices and sacramental life of the school.
- We discuss student progress in terms of the Catholic School Learning Plan, testing results and assessment instruments to promote improvement in student well-being and achievement.
- We recognize and celebrate student and school accomplishments, improvements and achievements.
- We support the commitment of our dedicated teachers, early childhood educators, support personnel and administrators.
- We enlist and welcome the contribution and involvement of teachers, early childhood educators, support personnel and administrators in the agendas of Catholic School Council meetings.
- We recognize and understand the role of the principal, as one of the school's educational leaders, as a member of the Catholic School Council, and manager of the school's day to day operations.
- We understand the mission of the Catholic School Council and its role to encourage active participation of parents in the school community.
- We have established goals and priorities and evaluate these goals on a regular basis.
- We use various tools to communicate with our school community.
- We have published our meeting dates to the school community.
- We report to our school community, through regular meetings, the progress of the council as well as challenges and issues facing Catholic education.
- We enlist parents'/guardians' involvement through volunteer committees, which provide services to the student, staff and parent community.

- We communicate progress and issues pertaining to the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board through access and participation in Catholic School Council In-services, Family of Schools meetings and the Central Committee for Catholic School Councils.
- We remain accountable to our school community, School Board and Ministry of Education through the maintenance of both minutes of meetings and accounting systems.
- We create and encourage an environment where parents, staff and students will enjoy their experiences and feel encouraged to participate in all activities.
- We maintain respect for the opinions, concerns, interests, and ideas of others.

MAKING YOUR CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL SUCCESSFUL

COMMUNICATION

The Catholic School Council is required to keep members of the school community informed about its activities. Effective communication is an ongoing process and an essential component of a successful school council.

Catholic School Councils must have sound methods of communicating with the school principal, with the school board, with parents, and with each other. The school council's communication strategy should also include an effective method of communicating with the school community on a regular basis.

The chair/co-chair must ensure that council members are accessible to each other. It is a good idea to develop a list of contact numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses for all council members at the beginning of the year and to distribute the list to all members. The chair/co-chairs and the principal must establish an effective way to communicate outside of regular meetings.

Trust, respect, and open communication are the nucleus for an effective partnership and, ultimately, an effective Catholic School Council. Partner with the school so that information can be sent home via the parent e-mail distribution list.

Assume a public profile in the school and in the school community. Opportunities may take the form of:

1. Setting up a Catholic School Council information table on Curriculum evening, Parent-Teacher Interview night and Welcome to Kindergarten evening,
2. Sending students home with a newsletter that could include the Council's meeting minutes and/or posting the minutes on the school website,
3. Posting notices in the parish church and community halls,
4. Setting up a Catholic School Council display in the main foyer of the school.
5. Establishing a webpage for your Catholic School Council which is accessible through your school web site. You will be able to post a lot of information parents will find helpful and informative
6. Network with other school councils
7. Participate in the organizations that are available for your use and represent the parents in our schools:
 - a. Family of Schools Meetings,
 - b. Central Committee of Catholic School Councils – through attendance at meetings and/or the in-service training sessions that are put on for the benefit of parents on School Councils,

- c. Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education. Your involvement will ensure that you have updated information to share with your Councils.
Note: Many will place you on their e-mail list and mail out information to you as well.
- 8. Establish ongoing communication with not only the Principal, Vice-Principals, members of the Catholic School Council but also with the staff and students within your school,
- 9. Call your Trustee and establish a communication link with him/her,
- 10. Learn the name of your Superintendent and how to reach him/her,
- 11. Attend a Board meeting at the Catholic Education Center and watch your Trustees in action. All meetings are open to the public and agendas are provided at the door. This is truly an educational experience.

***We Are All Partners in Catholic Education...Every Action
Communicated Must Place The Student First!***

SPECIAL GIFTS YOU BRING TO YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL

Members of your Catholic School Council, including the Administration, bring multiple gifts to a Catholic Secondary School Council:

1. Strong leadership – good communication skills, positive attitude, conflict resolution skills,
2. Commitment to quality Catholic Education – supporting academic improvement programs (remedial math and language arts), semester reviews identifying problem areas, supporting staff and Administration),
3. Dedication to the job,
4. Strong organizational skills – Agendas, letter writing, planning, etc.),
5. Involvement /strong belief in PARTNERSHIPS which lends itself to providing updated information to parents (participation on various Committees which provide such updates and keeps the concerns of the school alive);
6. Strong sense of fairness – promotion of consistency throughout the school;
7. Various teaching/training perspectives from both professional and personal lives (Special Ed, Union Reps, CYW, Management, Team building),
8. Understanding and appreciation - of the time given by volunteers to the Council – different levels of commitment due to varying circumstances in private and business life,
9. Strong sense of Catholicity through daily living and promotion in the daily activities of our school and the support of the newly formed position on Council for the OAPCE,
10. Support of our students promoting social justice causes,
11. Flexibility / Creativeness,
12. Sense of Humor – very important,
13. Friendliness,
14. Good listening skills,
15. Open to new suggestions/ideas,
16. Good decision making skills – ready to take responsibility for Council’s actions;
17. Willingness to communicate and promote different ways of communicating with each other, within the school, staff, and parents within the school community. (web sites, newsletters, newspapers).

ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COUNCIL MEMBERS AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Most schools have successful activities that promote positive relationships among members of Council and the community. Some proven ones in our schools are:

1. The holding of a Retreat early in the School year as soon as a new Council is established,
2. Retreats in a casual setting and which welcomes the participation by all members equally places everyone on an even playing field,
3. Music and Lighting are important as it sets the mood,
4. Sharing activities are the best way to “humanize” people and get rid of the “them” and “us” feeling that may or may not exist,
5. Trust walks – work great with groups of people who may not know each other,
6. Readings should be pertinent to your theme/focus for the evening/weekend/day,
7. Social time for over-night retreats – Laughter/FUN/Games (Trivial Pursuit),
8. Cost should not be a factor. This is an investment in the future of your school and the benefits definitely outweigh the costs.

Community Barbecues – Involving Administration/Staff/Parents /Students/Trustees/ Superintendents and in some cases local politicians working together at an open community function fosters friendship and mutual respect throughout the school community and local community. This is a visual sign of co-operation by all partners.

Plan a “Share the Meal” with your Trustee, Superintendent, Priests of your feeder parishes and the members of your Catholic School Council (which includes your Administration team and our Chaplain, which will be a potluck and held at the school.

Establish a Welcome Committee whose job it is to welcome new parents to the school community. This can be done through an individual welcoming letter to parents inviting them to come out to one of your Catholic School Council meetings.

Hold Joint workshops/speakers within your school community, Family of Schools, inviting parents from feeder schools (if the topic is applicable), students and parents. Fosters partnerships.

Joint activities such as Christmas Liturgies, Adopting Families, Food Drives, Toy Drives, Terry Fox Runs etc.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS - EFFECTIVE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCILS

Have you ever met anyone who truly enjoys going to meetings? Usually meetings are looked upon as a period of time taken out of a very busy day to discuss and discuss and never go anywhere.

Productive meetings are those that have a purpose, a timeframe (determined beginning and end), a roadmap or agenda and a result or conclusion. It is imperative that Catholic School Council meetings are held in a place where all stakeholders can have access to the meeting. Usually, the meetings are held at the school. The chairperson and principal should determine your agenda in consultation with all Catholic School Council members. Ask for input into the agenda at least two weeks prior to your meeting. Circulate the agenda through "back pack express", or e-mail and ask that anyone who cannot attend the meeting call the council secretary with the notice of absence.

The Catholic School Council agenda should reflect the Catholicity of the school council in that the meeting should always open and close with a prayer. You will find sample prayers and other examples of liturgies in this handbook.

Your agenda should cover old topics which still need to be addressed, or that have some follow-up reports made. Your agenda should be approved by the council before you proceed with the meeting. There should be reports under new business which reflect ongoing or new topics. Remember to review and approve your minutes and financial statements. Your council secretary should record all discussion and votes in the minutes.

Minutes should be circulated to all council members and amended and approved at the next council meeting. Remember that Catholic School Council minutes must be made public to your school community.

LINKS TO RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Regulation 298: Operation of Schools – Duties of Principals re. School Councils

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900298_e.htm

Regulation 612/00 School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_000612_e.htm

Ontario Ministry of Education Handbook “School Councils – A Guide for Members”.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council02.pdf>

“Involving Parents in the School: Tips for School Councils”

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/>