

A Guide to School/Centre Council

by ATA

INTRODUCTION

“The goal of consultation at every level is to ensure that the best possible educational service is provided to the students of the school board. It is recognized that teachers, as the persons most closely involved with teaching, have important input into the shaping of educational policies...”

Why have a School Council or Centre Council?

- Opportunity to be involved in the formation, modification and implementation of educational policies
- Teachers lead the discussion with the school/centre administration
- Teachers' views are presented and shared in an official manner

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS VS. STAFF MEETINGS

Teacher Council Meetings:

- Run by a teacher (Chairperson)
- Have powers to make recommendations (but not pass motions).

In the event of a unanimous motion, the Principal must only come back to the Council in writing as to why they are not following the motion.

- Get direct answers and explanations

Staff Meetings:

- Run by the administration
- For information purposes only
- No major decisions should be made

Other Key Points...

- Since no change in school policy can be implemented without a prior consultation on the issue, council must meet whenever changes are proposed - a staff meeting is NOT a consultation - a school council meeting is REQUIRED.
- Teachers CONTROL council - a legal body representing teacher's viewpoint in the school.
- Council discusses with admin. How they want their school to operate - members of council are expected to know the opinions of the teachers they are representing.
- Members have both a right AND an obligation to tell admin. What teachers want.
- Guests can be invited if they can provide data that will help the decision making
- Up to nine members (notify ATA by Monday, Sept. 30, if possible)
- To be established by September 15
- Principal is a NON-VOTING member

Role of the School/Centre Council Chairperson

- To prepare and post the agenda.
- Chair sets agenda “in consultation with principal”
- To run pre-council meetings
- To call the meeting to order
- To announce the business of the meeting, according to the agenda
- To recognize members entitled to speak
- To handle the motions
- To ensure at the beginning of each year that the Council establishes its rules of internal procedures

Role of the Principal

- Is a NON-VOTING member of Council
- Just because a principal may speak against a proposed motion, it does not mean the motion is lost, nor does it mean that members should be influenced
- Responsible for adding certain items to the agenda.
- Must receive the recommendations from the council, each time a vote is taken

Operation of the School/Centre Council

- Council shall meet at least six times during the school year
- All council meetings shall be open to all members of the teaching staff
- While meetings are open to public, non members cannot speak, that is the role of members only.
- At its first meeting, the council shall elect a Chairperson and a Secretary from among its members to serve for the year. The committee will establish its own rules of internal procedure.
- Decisions of council are made by a majority vote of the members present who are entitled to vote. If votes are equally divided, the Chairperson has the deciding vote.
- No meeting can occur without at least two-thirds of its voting members present. No lack of quorum shall impede the implementation of subjects vital to the operation of the school.

Operation of the School/Centre Council (continued)

- Should council not be able to convene during July and August at the request of the Principal, the principal may disregard this consultative process for matters relating to clause 4-2.02 that require decision during the months stipulated.
- In such cases the Principal shall immediately send a letter to the Chairperson with a copy to the President of the ATA informing them of the situation, and the action the Principal has taken. These decisions and the reasons therefore shall be the subject of discussion at the next meeting of the council.

Agenda

- Staff should be provided with opportunity to add items to the agenda, by speaking to members, who inform the chair.
- Post agenda in obvious area and be consistent with the location.
- Circulate agenda among staff.
- Unless it is an emergency, administration items (which must go to Council) need to go to the Chairperson 5 work days in advance of the meeting. This is mandatory according to the local CA.
- It is suggested that the agenda be shown to the administration after the staff has had a chance to add their items. The council is more likely to get answers and not have to wait until the following meeting if done this way... plus no one likes surprises.

Topics for Discussion at a School/Centre Council Meeting

- Council has a wide mandate to discuss issues of concern in a school/centre.
- The best-run schools are ones in which the staff and administration have open lines of communication, respect the opinions of each other, and work together.

Council's policy decisions need to have the support of a clear majority of the staff. It can happen that individuals want to push their own personal agendas, but it is strongly recommended that the Council be as free of cliques/dissent as possible

Items for Consultation

Items calling for the participation of teachers only:

- the overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of the objectives and contents of the programme of studies and for the development of local programmes of studies to meet the specific needs of the students;
- the time allocation for each compulsory and elective subject (if teaching staff and administration do not agree, it does not go to GB);
- the implementation of the programme of studies of the centre;
- the local programmes of studies to meet the specific needs of the students;
- the criteria for the introduction of new instructional methods;
- the textbooks and instructional material required for teaching the programme of studies

Consultation (continued)...

- the determination of the educational objectives of the school in relation to the community which it serves and this on at least an annual basis;
- the school organization plan for the following school year,
- the type of teachers needed to meet the educational objectives of the school;
- the general organization of student activities;
- the integration of teaching members new to the staff and particularly those who have not taught before;
- the intent and application of school regulations;
- the application in the school of teaching methods, the criteria for evaluating students in their studies, and the policy on report cards;
- the organization and the evaluation for internal purposes of all professional days as well as calendar placement of those which are moveable;

Consultation (cont'd)...

- parent/teacher relations and liaison with the governing board;
- distribution of the duties and responsibilities of the teachers in the school;
- the establishment of budgetary priorities in the school;
- the system of monitoring (student) lates and absences;
- the system for reporting absences of teachers, arranging for their substitution, and reporting their return to work.

Items calling for the participation of teachers and the other staff of the school:

- the student supervision policy;
- the rules of conduct and safety measures;
- the approach for the implementation of the Basic School Regulation;
- the programming of educational activities entailing changes in the arrival and departure times or requiring the students to leave school premises;
- an approach for the implementation of students' services and special educational services programmes;
- the rules governing the placement of students and their promotion from one cycle to another at the elementary level;
- the needs of the school with respect to each staff category and the professional development needs of the staff;
- the implementation of the programmes relating to students' services and popular; •
- the operating rules of the centre.

Sample Timeline / Agenda Items

August

- Council should be elected and hold its first meeting during the pedagogical days that begin the school year (cannot be elected after September 30)
- Members elected should choose a chairperson and a secretary for the year
- Establish internal rules of order
- Set meeting times for the year
- Teachers and admin should agree on the emergency substitution plan at the beginning of the year and agree on the selection process for emergency subs

September

- Status of workload distribution
- Review of parent/teacher meetings and interviews/compensatory days
- Review of reporting schedule and procedures
- Procedures re teacher absence and substitution
- Staff phone chain / emails for emergencies i.e. school closings, snow days, etc.
- Orientation of teachers new to the school, including substitutes
Supervision schedule (interim schedule)
- Use of professional days

Sample Timeline / Agenda Items (continued)...

October

- Review of final workload distribution
- Budget status
- Discuss ECA approved activities
- Standards and Procedures for the evaluation of student achievement

November

- Review school calendar of special events
- Consider special planning for the days preceding the Christmas holiday

December

- Begin study of objectives, curriculum offerings and school organization for the following year.

Sample Timeline / Agenda Items (cont'd)...

January

- Continue study of objectives, curriculum offerings and school organization for the following year.

February

- Formulate programme and organizational recommendations
- Approach for the implementation of popular education (Adult and Vocational Training sectors)

March

- Address staffing organization plans
- Budgetary proposals for instructional material and educational activities

Sample Timeline / Agenda Items (cont'd)...

April

- Student Projections (with the exception of Adult and Vocational Education courses)...**April 15**
- List of known vacancies/anticipated staff needs...**April 30**

May

- Review rules of conduct
- Planning for new programmes
- Redistribution of workload due to invigilation of June exams

June

- Review status of staffing plan
- Review past year and plan for beginning of new school year

Final Thoughts / Suggestions

- Invite guests to Council if an “expert” opinion is needed
- In order to keep everyone on the same page, the Chair should hold a pre-council meeting with teachers only, and if really needed, a post-council meeting. However, if the council and principal have a positive relationship, pre-council meetings are not necessary (no need to make the principal feel ganged up on).
- Distribute or post Council minutes for all to see
- Don't be afraid to ask for a caucus during a meeting if there is confusion on a motion/topic
- Be sure to communicate with your administration in an open and honest manner. No one likes surprises and if the council wants to get answers, then adequate time is needed for these answers to be found.
- Ideally, the Council is a collaborative effort, not an “us vs. them” situation
- Everyone should be working towards achieving a better school for all, and put their egos and personal issues/preferences aside

THANK YOU!!