

School Council Meetings

How often should school council meet?

A school council must meet at least 8 times in each year, and at least once per school term. It is good practice to have 2 meetings per term. All members are expected to attend. If you are unable to attend the meeting, an apology should be submitted to the executive officer (the principal) and this will be recorded in the minutes.

How long should meetings go for?

School council meetings should require no longer than 2½ hours, regardless of whether they are in a primary or a secondary setting.

If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the chair should ask councillors whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting by a specified period of time (eg 15 minutes).

A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting.

What is a Quorum?

A quorum requires not less than one half of school council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting with a majority of members present who are not DEECD employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for the Department are counted as DEECD employees for the purpose of a quorum.

A member of the school council may be present in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

If the president is absent

In the absence of the president, the vice president chairs the school council meeting. If both president and vice president are absent, councillors may elect a member to chair the meeting. A DEECD employee cannot chair a meeting regardless of their membership category (staff or parent).

What are the required meeting protocols?

- All members need to be listened to – you do not have to agree with all that is said but you do need to hear it and try to understand it
- Keep to the issue under discussion
- Keep the focus on improving learning outcomes for students
- All discussions should focus on the issues, not on individual people or their personalities
- One conversation at a time and give your full attention to the speaker
- Council members need to make every effort to present information, opinions and feelings clearly and succinctly
- No question is too trivial. Ask questions to ensure you understand what is being said
- The opinions of all council members should be respected
- Avoid using language that is not easily understood by everyone – this might include educational or Department jargon

- Councillors represent the entire school community, not individuals or sections of the school community
- Start and finish meetings on time.

Chairing Meetings

It is the role of the chairperson to:

- Start and end each meeting on time
- Keep opening remarks welcoming but brief
- Introduce any guests, being sure to include all those presenting agenda items or those that are visitors to the meeting
- Review the agenda with council members. Outline what is to be accomplished. Keep to the agenda and the timelines
- Maintain order and focus on priorities
- Ensure that minutes of each meeting are kept
- Allow for individual input by all school councillors during discussion of agenda items
- Try to remain neutral and provide alternative ways to solve problems or make decisions
- Encourage decision making through consensus. This will enable greater commitment to the decisions made by school council
- Check that all council members have the same understanding of any decisions
- At the end of each meeting, summarize the meeting, reviewing key actions and decisions
- Remind members of the time, date, and location of the next meeting and note any items of new business to be included on that meeting's agenda
- Reflect on the effectiveness of a meeting. Use that information to improve future council meetings.

How will we know if the meeting has been effective?

You will know that a council meeting has been effective when all councillors feel that:

- The meeting had a purpose
- They have a sense of accomplishment
- They contributed to the discussion
- They were valued by others
- Creative ideas, alternatives, or solutions were generated
- They were able to share different points of view
- They are committed to the decisions made and the actions taken
- They look forward to working together again
- That decisions were focused on improved learning outcomes for students.

Further information is also available from: *School Councils A Guide for Members*: Ontario Ministry of Education: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/council.pdf>