

CONSULTATION, AKA COMMITTEES

A. School Council: The Teachers' Voice

1. Introduction

Participation at the School Council level is your best **contractual** opportunity to be involved in the formation, modification and implementation of educational policies as well as to develop a **dialogue** with the school administration. By making effective use of School Council, we can exert influence on the educational process and be instrumental in advocating changes to improve the quality of education.

We have noticed that there are a few schools that have decided to not have a school council. We would urge you to think about the importance of "helping" your school administration by giving the benefit of your good advice via the School Council, your only legal way to have input into how your school is run.

And keep in mind that you should elect people who **want** to serve and who will undertake to **represent** the views of the staff.

2. Composition

- The Council must be elected (by secret ballot) no later than 30 September.
- The Council must meet at least once a month between September and June inclusive.
- The Council can be dissolved during the year by a majority vote of the teaching staff.
- Teacher members on the School Council shall not be greater than 8, nor fewer than 3.
- The principal is by right a voting member. If s/he cannot attend, s/he may, on occasion, be represented by a vice-principal.
- If there is a vice-principal at the school, he/she sits on school council as a non-voting member.

Note: The MTA Constitution specifies that the Senior MTA Rep should automatically be a member of School Council. Be sure to count him/her as one of the 8 teacher members of Council.

3. What can the Council discuss?

The School Council has a fairly wide mandate to discuss issues of concern in a school. For a full understanding of the responsibilities of a school council, please read Chapter 4 of the Local Agreement and, in particular, **Clauses 4-2.07 to 4-2.13**. Pay special attention to Clause 4-2.07 (program designed to recognize **value-added** and to assist in the assignment, recruitment and retention of teachers). More details about this program can be found in Appendix XXVI of the Entente.

- The Council **must** be consulted on in-school application of decisions of a pedagogical or disciplinary nature emanating from the Board, the Comité de Gestion de la Taxe Scolaire, the Ministry of Education, etc.
- The Council **must** be consulted **prior** to any decision made by the principal that would establish or modify the pedagogical or disciplinary organization of the school.
- The Council must be consulted on particular issues, e.g.
 - educational objectives
 - student activities
 - professional days
 - distribution of duties and responsibilities of teachers in the school.
 - the school organization plan
- Any teacher can place an item on the agenda of a Council meeting.
- For items which the principal is obliged to consult Council about, **five (5) days' notice** of such items on the agenda **must** be given to the Council Chairperson by the principal.
- This 5-day notice must be observed by teachers also.
- The Council is entitled to receive a full and detailed disclosure of in-school **budgets**, purchasing procedures, etc. (See Clause 4-2.13, page 10 of the Local Agreement, for full details.)

- One major source of dissatisfaction in schools is programming.
- Programming considerations sometimes lead to teachers being asked to teach odd subjects to fill out their timetable. Please read 5-21.04 of the Provincial Entente. Even if this clause has been respected, Council can verify whether or not a more reasonable allocation could be made. Some administrations "collapse" an entire department and distribute the classes among other teachers.

Council can establish general policy recommendations in favour of maintaining a core of qualified, experienced teachers in each subject and insist on sending its motions, if necessary, to the Regional Director, the Director of Educational Services, the Director of Human Resources, and the MTA. Council should avoid becoming involved in personnel management decisions but 4-2.09 (a), (b), and (c) (Local Agreement) should at least allow you to ensure that sufficient qualified, experienced teachers are retained for the various groups forecast each year.

It is vital that Council's general policy recommendations have the support of a clear majority of the staff to avoid creating cliques and dissension.

4. What is the difference between a School Council Meeting and a Staff Meeting?

The School Council is a decision-making body of the school. A staff meeting is for information only. Decisions that affect the school should never be made at a staff meeting, but should be made at a Council meeting.

Remember: School Council meetings are run by a teacher who is acting as Chairperson, but a staff meeting is run by the principal. If the principal raises an item in a staff meeting which requires decision-making, members of staff should remind the principal that the item is Council business, and not staff meeting business.

5. Operation

- At the first meeting, the Council elects a chairperson and a secretary.
- The Council adopts its own rules of internal procedure.
- In order to reach a decision, a majority of the members **present** and **voting** is necessary.
- Any member of School Council may invite any "resource person" to speak to the item under consideration. The chairperson has only to **inform** the principal that such a person is coming to the meeting. The principal must follow the same procedure if s/he wishes to invite someone also. For example, somebody from the MTA Office could serve as a resource-person on a topic, if you feel you need assistance.
- Within five (5) workdays of each Council meeting, the chairperson must inform the staff of the Council's resolutions (i.e., distribute the unofficial minutes) and **upon request**, report to the staff on its deliberations. **Please note that sometimes we hear from teachers who take the minutes, but who are unable to distribute them within the normal time allocation, that the reason the minutes are delayed is BECAUSE THE PRINCIPAL HASN'T APPROVED THEM YET!** In actual fact, the principal is like any other member of council, and doesn't have the right to edit or pre-approve the School Council minutes. S/he should be voting on them at the actual School Council meeting, as everyone else does.

6. The Role of the Principal on School Council

The principal is a member of council like any other, and as such has the right to vote on any motions proposed at a meeting of the School Council. When an item is raised for discussion and a motion is presented, council members may speak for or against the motion. Just because the principal may **speak** against the motion does **not** mean the motion is lost.

The principal does have an additional responsibility since s/he is responsible for putting certain items on the agenda in the first place. In addition, the principal must receive the recommendations of the council, each time a vote is taken, and the motion is carried by a simple majority of those present and voting.

Should the principal **not** carry out the Council's recommendation before the next meeting, the subject is placed on the agenda under matters arising from the minutes and s/he must explain why it hasn't been done either orally or in writing.

If the Council is not satisfied with the reasons given by the principal for not carrying out the recommendation, the Council can **adopt a motion** to write to the appropriate Regional Director (**with copy to the MTA**) outlining the problem and the Council's dissatisfaction with the situation. The Council can also decide to invite the Regional Director and someone from the MTA office to a meeting to discuss it further to see if a more satisfactory arrangement can be achieved.

Again, the principal may speak against writing such a letter, but as long as such a motion is duly moved and carried, it is the responsibility of the Chairperson (or Secretary) to deal with the correspondence.

The principal **cannot stop** the Council from writing a letter. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the Regional Director to answer the Council Chairperson **directly** in writing.

Incidentally, copies of **all** correspondence written by the Council should be sent to the MTA office to enable us to support Council requests and to help detect common problems and concerns in our schools. It is also useful to send copies to your Governing Board.

7. The duties of the Chairperson:

- (a) to prepare and post the agenda
- (b) to call the meeting to order
- (c) to announce the business of the meeting, according to the agenda
- (d) to recognize members entitled to speak
- (e) to handle the motions
- (f) to ensure at the beginning of each year that the Council establishes its rules of internal procedures, e.g., whether the chairperson votes or not.

8. Feedback

Reliable feedback helps a Council to be truly representative and is one of the best weapons a Council can have. Any recommendation made by Council without staff support is useless and some principals thrive on the resulting conflict.

In some schools a **cell** system has been set up. That is, each teacher member is responsible for 5 or 6 staff members to poll their opinions on items that require feedback extremely quickly. A short **caucus** or "**pre-council**" of teacher Council members before the scheduled meeting is also extremely helpful in order to synthesize and correlate feedback.

Always bring your copy of the Provincial Entente and the Local Agreement to every Council meeting for fast reference.

9. A Typical Agenda

- 1. Call to order
- 2. Additions to and approval of the agenda.
- 3. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of November 6, 2019.
- 4. Matters arising from the previous minutes (including correspondence received)
 - (a) Placement of professional days
 - (b) Request for additional teacher
 - (c)

5. New Business
 - (a) Budgets
 - (b) Emergency substitution system
 - (c)
6. Additions to the agenda
 - (a)
 - (b)
7. Date of next meeting
8. Adjournment

10. Minutes

Minutes should accurately record the decisions made by the Council. To this end, they should contain the following information:

1. The name of the group.
2. The date and place and time of the meeting.
3. The names of the members present, including arrival time of latecomers.
4. Any changes in the minutes of the previous meeting, and the subsequent approval of the minutes.
5. All the main motions (not those which were withdrawn).
6. Results of votes taken on each motion.
7. The hour of adjournment.
8. The signature of the secretary.

It is not necessary or advisable to keep verbatim minutes of the debate. A written record of all Council motions is essential to avoid confusion later.

B. Allocation of Resources Committee (ARC)

You can find information about the Allocation of Resources Committee under article 4-3.00 of the Local Agreement.

The composition of the committee resembles the school council as described above, but differs in that a vice-principal of the school may also serve as a voting member of ARC, in addition to the principal.

The purpose of ARC is to:

- a) identify the specialized and financial resources needed to handle the special needs students for the following school year
- b) distribute the special resources allocated to the school, to define access to services, including provisional help for students not yet coded
- c) to assess the effectiveness of the access to services
- d) to report to the MTA/EMSB Special Education Committee (SEC)

COMPENSATION FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL, GOVERNING BOARD, AND ARC MEMBERS

In a Letter of Agreement (p.67 of the MTA/EMSB Local Agreement), the EMSB has agreed that each teacher who serves on School Council, the Governing Board, or ARC, is entitled to one day off after June 24th. This is 1 day off, even if you serve on all 3 committees, and is **in addition to any other days off you may have earned by doing extra-curricular activities.**

C. MTA-EMSB Parity Committees

There are 3 formal parity committees established in the local agreement for consultation between the Board and the Union on various topics. The formal consultative process is done on a parity basis - an equal number of members from Board and Union. One year the Chairperson of a committee is from the Union and the Secretary from the Board, and the following year this is reversed.

(1) **Educational Policies Committee (EPC)** (4-5.00 Local Agreement)

This committee now has 14 members and meets once a month from September to June to discuss matters of educational policy. The EMSB and MTA have agreed to set up two permanent subcommittees – one for issues related to the Adult Education Sector and one for issues related to the Vocational Training Sector. Each subcommittee has 10 members (5 MTA, 5 EMSB). Their mandates and functioning mirror the functioning of the EPC itself.

The following list gives an idea of the purpose of the committee: (extract from the Local Agreement /clause 4-5.05 pages 14 and 15)

The Educational Policies Committee must be consulted on the following subjects: before voting on a resolution on the following matters:

- (a) *new teaching methods and how to implement them.*
- (b) *allocation of resources for the training of teachers in these new methods.*
- (c) *the evaluation and examination of pupils in their studies.*
- (d) *introduction of new courses.*
- (e) *selection of instructional materials and textbooks as well as the terms and conditions of their implementation.*
- (f) *educational research and experimentation.*
- (g) *the introduction of new pedagogical services to the School Board and the evaluation of such services.*
- (h) *the use of computers in teaching as such, as well as in the fulfillment of the general duties of a teacher.*
- (i) *changes in the report cards.*
- (j) *the timetable.*
- (k) *educational services in economically disadvantaged areas.*
- (l) *the organization and evaluation for internal purposes of all Regional and Board-wide professional days.*

There are **two** sub-committees of EPC;

- i) EPC Adult education sub-committee
Makes policy recommendations to the EPC specific to the adult education sector.
- ii) EPC Vocational education sub-committee
Makes policy recommendations to the EPC specific to the vocational education sector.

(2) **Professional Improvement Committee (PIC)** (4-6.00 Local Agreement)

This committee has 10 members and is responsible for the distribution of the money allocated in the Provincial Entente for professional improvement.

Elsewhere in this handbook, there is a section on professional improvement. More details on the functioning of this committee will be found there. The PIC has established a sub-committee to look at the issues of new teachers and mentorship, and given it part of the PIC budget to work with. This sub-committee has called itself SORT, standing for **Support Our Rookie Teachers**.

(3) Special Education Committee (SEC) (4-7.00 Local Agreement)

This committee has 10 members, and its mandate is as follows: [extract from the Local Agreement, clause 4-7.01]

- a) to give its view on the policy on the organization of educational services for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning disabilities and to make recommendations concerning the implementation of the policy and the methods for integrating students into regular groups as well as the support services required for the students' integration;
- b) to give its view on the services to be offered at the board level;
- c) to verify all the resources available under clause 8-9.01;
- d) to determine the criteria for the allocation of resources to schools according to the policy in effect at the board;
- e) to analyze requests from schools in relation to the allocation criteria established;
- f) based on the total available resources available under Clause 8-9.01, to recommend to the board;
 - i) the allocation of resources among the schools;
 - ii) the portion of resources to be allocated as compensation due as a result of the weighting prescribed in clause 8-9.07;
 - iii) the reserve to be maintained for additional services that will be determined during the following year under clause 8-9.05;
- g) to receive and study the reports prepared under sub clause e) of clause 8-9.03 and to make the recommendation it deems appropriate.