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A GUIDE TO TEACHER COUNCIL

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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...” (4-1.01 Local Agreement)





WHY DO WE NEED A TEACHER 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



TEACHER COUNCIL MEETINGS VS. STAFF MEETINGS

Teacher Council Meetings:

- Run by a teacher (Chairperson)
- Have powers to make recommendations and some decisions (pass motions)
- Get direct answers and explanations

Staff Meetings:

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



COUNCIL COMPOSITION

- Teacher members: no more than 8, no fewer than 3.
- The MTA rep is automatically part of the 8. In schools where there is more than one rep, the spot goes to the senior rep.
- When more than 8 teachers are interested or are nominated, an election must be held.
- Elect people who want to serve and who understand that their role is to represent the views of the staff even if they do not necessarily share the same opinion.
- Any teacher can serve on Council. Some schools choose to elect teachers by cycle or department, but this is not obligatory.
- Administration: usually the principal, replaced by the VP when absent.
- ***The VP can also be a non-voting member of Council when the principal is present.***



ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

- To prepare and post the agenda
- 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, e.g., whether the chairperson votes or not, if observers are allowed to attend meetings, etc.



ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

- Is a member of Council like any other.
- Has the right to vote on any motion proposed at a meeting.
- Just because the principal may speak against the motion, it does **not** mean the motion is lost. The motion must still go to a vote which should be representative of vote taken at Pre-Council.
- Responsible for adding certain items to the agenda.
- Must receive the recommendations of the council, each time a vote is taken.



OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL

- Chairperson and Secretary are elected at the first meeting.
- Adopts its own rules of internal procedure.
- A majority of the members must be in attendance, and voting is necessary to reach a decision.
- Guests may be invited to speak to an item under consideration when necessary. The chairperson must inform the principal ahead of time. The principal must follow the same procedure if they wish to invite someone. For example, somebody from the MTA Office could serve as a resource person on a topic.
- 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).

Please note that no member, including the principal, should approve / vet the minutes before the chairperson and secretary distribute them.



AGENDA

- Staff should be provided with opportunity to add items to the agenda.
- Post agenda in obvious area and be consistent with the location.
- Circulate agenda among staff.
- Person adding an item to the agenda should sign their name so that chairperson may have prior information about the item.
- 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 also true for teacher items covered in 4-2.09 Local.
- 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.



AGENDA (CONT'D)..

Chairperson should prioritize items

- Items left from previous meeting should be dealt with on a priority basis at the next meeting
- Chairperson may decide some items are for information only and can be dealt with via memo and/ or at a staff meeting
- When appropriate, chairperson may ask cycles or departments to pre-discuss items



FOLLOW-UP ON MOTIONS

- If the principal does 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 they must explain why it hasn't been done either orally or in writing. (4-2.15 Local)
- If Council is not satisfied with the reasons given by the principal, they can adopt a motion to write a letter to the Deputy Director General (with copy to the MTA) outlining the problem. The Council can also decide to invite the Deputy Director General and someone from the MTA office to a meeting to discuss it further to see if a more satisfactory arrangement can be achieved. MTA should be contacted before any letter is written or invitation is sent. This should be for major issues only.
- 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.
- It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director General to answer the Council Chairperson directly in writing.
- 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.



TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AT A TEACHER COUNCIL MEETING

- Council has a wide mandate to discuss issues of concern in a school/centre.
- If an issue is already covered by a Collective Agreement or is of a very personal nature, then these items should not come up at School Council. The chairperson should “screen” these items and consult MTA when unclear on how to proceed.
- 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/dissentation as possible.



TEACHER COUNCIL MUST BE CONSULTED ON:

- In-school application of decisions of a pedagogical or disciplinary nature coming from the Comité de Gestion de la Taxe Scolaire, MELS, etc.
- Any decisions made by the administrator that would establish or modify the pedagogical or disciplinary nature of the school.
- And the council shall act as the school-level body of teachers in the application of Appendix XXVI (Value Added).

(4-02.07 Local)



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 CONT'D...

- 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, as per Article 8-10.00 of the Entente and 8-10.02.101 Local;
- 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 acceptance and orientation of student teachers and the criteria for their distribution;
- 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;
- the distribution of the duties and responsibilities of the teachers in the school;
- the establishment of budgetary priorities in the school;
- the determination of the rotation schedule for emergency substitution in conformity with Clause 5-1.35 of the Local Agreement;
- the scheduling of possible secretarial and other human resource help in the school;
- the system of monitoring (student) lates and absences;
- the purchase, use, and allocation of computers in the school in conformity with Article 10-12.00 of the Entente;
- the system for reporting absences of teachers, arranging for their substitution, and reporting their return to work. (4-2.09 Local).



CONSULTATION CONT'D...

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. (4-9.03 Local)



FINALLY...

4-2.10 Local

- The School Council must approve any proposal made in accordance with article 8-10.00 (school organization plan) – in particular projects designed for all or some of the teachers in the school.
- The School Council must approve professional development activities for the teachers that are organized by the principal.

4-2.12 Local

- The School Board and the Union agree that the collection, sale, or distribution of materials for a school fundraising activity or to benefit outside, non-profit, or service organizations, shall be unacceptable unless such collection, sale, or distribution has received the prior **approval** of the School Council.



TIMELINE

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

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



TIMELINE (CONT'D)...

October

- Review of final workload distribution
- Budget status
- Discuss ECA approved activities
- Discuss school system for monitoring/recording value-added credits, as well as value-added provisions

November

- Council should be requesting that they be given their school's budget. This is according to clause 4-2.13 Local: "The school administration shall continue to provide budgetary information and updates on money expended throughout the school year, as well as any changes to the budget that may occur." This entitles teachers to be given a copy of the operating budget of your school /centre.
- Review school calendar of special events (including exam schedule & supervision).
- Consider special planning for the days preceding the holidays.



TIMELINE (CONT'D)...

December

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

January

- Continue study of objectives, curriculum offerings and organization for the following year, begun in December.

February

- Plan major renovation / equipment requests for summer scheduling.
- Examine student enrolment forecasts for the next school year.
- Formulate programme and organizational recommendations based on work done in December and January.
- Examine results of budget distribution for current year and begin planning for next year.



TIMELINE (CONT'D)...

March

- Establish budget distribution for following year
- Address staffing organization plans
- Begin provisional staffing needs

April

- Staff Assistant job description, qualifications and criteria for selection
- School calendar for the following year including:
 - local pedagogical days
 - evening parent meetings
 - scheduling of compulsory evenings without compensation
- Discuss value-added provisions, and make sure Council or sub-committee of Council is ready to review and determine credits



TIMELINE (CONT'D)...

May

- Redistribution of workload due to invigilation of June exams
- Planning for new programmes
- Review rules of conduct & safety and policies
- Review emergency preparedness plans
- Review Value-Added assigned credits with administration (early May)

June

- Review status of staffing plan
- Review the per capita allocations and the global amounts available to the school for the following school year. (budget)



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
- 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.

THANK YOU!





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