

Equinox Holistic Alternative School By-Laws

As updated June 10, 2015

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1. Purpose of School Councils

- a) The purpose of the EHAS Council is, through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.
- a) A school council's primary means of achieving its purpose is by making recommendations in accordance with this regulation to the principal of the school and the TDSB.

2. Interpretation

- a) "meeting", in respect of a school council or a parent involvement committee, does not include a training session or other event where the council or the committee does not discuss or decide matters that it has authority to decide.
- b) "parent" means, in respect of a school council, a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school, and includes a guardian as defined in The Education Act.
- b) "parent member" means, in respect of a school council, a member of the council who is elected to the council in accordance with school council election procedures or who fills a vacancy created by a parent member ceasing to hold office.

3. Composition

- a) The Equinox School Council shall be composed of the School Council Executive plus all other parent members in attendance at a given meeting of the School Council.
- b) The School Council Executive shall be composed of the following people:
 - I. A minimum of three and a maximum of 12 elected parent members
 - II. The principal of the school (the principal may delegate membership responsibility to the vice-principal).
 - III. One teacher representative who is a teacher who is currently employed at the school, other than the principal or vice-principal, elected by the teachers. Teacher rep elections must be within the first 30 calendar days of the school year; any teacher can vote. The principal and vice-principal do not vote.
 - IV. One non-teaching staff representative who a person who is currently employed at the school, other than the principal, vice-principal or any other teacher, elected by non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff rep elections must be within the first 30 calendar days of the school year; any non-teaching staff other than principal and vice-principal can vote.
 - V. One pupil enrolled in the school who is appointed by the principal of the school, if the principal determines, after consulting the other members of the school council, that the council should include a pupil. The principal may consider advice received from students regarding the appointment of a student. Students may also be included in committee work of a school council. Furthermore, since council meetings must be open to the public, interested students are welcome to attend.
 - VI. Two community representatives appointed by the other members of the council. One community representative must be a parent from Roden Public School. The community rep cannot be an employee at the school. If the community representative is employed elsewhere by the board, he or she must inform other council members prior to appointment. The community reps should not be EHAS parents.

- VII. One person appointed by an association that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, if the association that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Home and School Association, is established in respect of the school.
 - VIII. One Class Rep Co-ordinator elected by class reps according to the process outlined in the Class Rep Handbook
 - IX. One Volunteer Co-ordinator elected by classroom volunteer reps according to the process outlined in the Volunteer Rep Handbook
 - X. One Alternative School Advisory Committee Representative: appointed by council and willing to attend ASAC meetings and report to council.
- c) Parent members must constitute a majority of the members of the School Council Executive.
 - d) A person who is employed by the Toronto District School Board cannot be appointed as a community representative on the council unless: he or she is not employed at the school; and the other members of the school council are informed of the person's employment before the appointment.
 - e) An elected member of the Toronto District School Board cannot be a member of the Equinox School Council.
 - f) All appointments made under 3. b) VI. And 3. B) X. must be by majority vote at a school council meeting of the newly elected council.
 - g) A person is qualified to be a parent member of a school council if he or she is a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school.
 - h) However, a person is not qualified to be a parent member of a school council if: he or she is employed at the school; or he or she is not employed at the school but is employed elsewhere by the board that established the council, unless he or she takes reasonable steps to inform people qualified to vote in the election of parent members of that employment.
 - i) A person is qualified to vote in an election of parent members of a school council if he or she is a parent of a pupil who is enrolled in the school.

4. Elections

- a) An Elections Committee will be struck in May to begin preparations for elections in September.
- b) The appearance of conflict of interest can be avoided by establishing an election committee composed of individuals who will not be standing for election the following year.
- c) The election committee shall:
 - I. provide nomination forms, if required;
 - II. ensure that the school community is notified of election procedures and election date(s), location, and time, at least fourteen days in advance of the election;
 - III. (for School Council Executive elections) request a profile from all candidates and make these available to the electorate;
 - IV. conduct the elections by secret ballot;
 - V. count the ballots;
 - VI. help the principal notify all candidates of the results;
 - VII. keep all results and related information confidential.

- d) An election of parent members of a school council shall be held during the first 30 calendar days of each school year, on a date that is fixed by the chair or co-chairs of the school council after consulting with the principal of the school.
- e) Each parent/guardian seeking election to the School Council Executive must be nominated or self-nominated in writing, must have a child registered at the school and must declare if he or she is employed by the school board.
- f) The principal of a school shall, at least 14 days before the date of the election of parent members, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the date, time and location of the election to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.
- g) The notice required may be given by, giving the notice to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.
- h) The first election at the first meeting of the school year is the election of all parent members to the School Council. The Chair of the meeting shall cast a single ballot listing the names of all parents with a child enrolled in the school. No nominations are required for this election.
- i) Elections for the School Council Executive shall be held following the election of all parent members to the School Council.
- j) For School Council Executive elections:
 - Each parent seeking election must be nominated, or self-nominated, in writing, must have a child enrolled in the school, and must declare if he or she is employed by the school board.
 - The election of parent members shall be by secret ballot.
 - Candidates may observe ballot counting.
- k) A newly elected school council shall meet within 35 calendar days of the school year.
- l) At the first meeting of the new school council at the beginning of the year, the council shall set dates, times, and locations for its meetings throughout the year.

5. Term of Office

- a) A person elected or appointed as a member of a school council holds office from the later of, the date he or she is elected or appointed; and the date of the first meeting of the school council after the elections held at the beginning of the school year, until the date of the first meeting of the school council after the elections held at the beginning of the next school year.
- b) A member of a school council may be re-elected or reappointed.

6. Vacancies

- a) When a parent member who is not a member of the School Council Executive is absent from a school council meeting, his or her position is deemed to be vacant.
- b) When a parent who is not a member of the School Council Executive attends a School Council meeting after being absent from the previous meeting, his or her presence at the meeting is deemed to fill the vacancy created by his or her earlier absence, and he or she is re-appointed, under these bylaws, as a member of the School Council.
- c) A vacancy in the membership of the School Council Executive may be filled by appointment.
- d) A vacancy in the membership of the School Council does not prevent the council from exercising its authority.

- e) Appointments to the School Council Executive are to be by majority vote at a meeting of the School Council.

7. Officers

- a) A school council shall have a chair and a vice-chair, or two co-chairs; a secretary; and a treasurer.
- b) Officers must be parent members of the council, and shall be elected by the members of the council.
- c) A person who is employed by the board that established the council cannot be chair, co-chair, vice-chair, secretary or treasurer of the council.
- d) Officers have signing authority; two of the four officers must sign.
- e) If the chair cannot be present at a council meeting, any of the officers can chair the council meeting.
- f) If one of the Officers can no longer perform his/her duties, the duties can be immediately assumed by any other Officer.

8. Expectations of School Council Members

- a) Voting members of council: participate on any committees established by the school council; contribute to the discussions of the school council; solicit the views of other parents and members of the community to share with the school council; observe the council's code of ethics and established by-laws.
- b) Members of the School Council Executive should not miss more than two meetings.
- c) All members of the School Council Executive are expected to participate in at least one committee or hold one of the officer positions.
- d) School Council Executive members are expected to hand off all duties/responsibilities/documents to the incoming members of council.
- e) If School Council Executive members have missed too many meetings or are not performing expected tasks, the chair may reassign his/her responsibilities in accordance with the council's vacancies procedures.

9. Meetings

- a) A school council shall meet at least four times during the school year and may meet as often as monthly as agreed upon by the Principal.
- b) A school council shall meet within the first 35 days of the school year, after the elections on a date fixed by the principal of the school.
- c) A meeting of a school council cannot be held unless, a majority of the current members of the School Council Executive are present at the meeting; and a majority of the members of the council who are present at the meeting are parent members.
- d) A meeting cannot be considered a meeting of the school council unless the principal, or delegated vice-principal, is in attendance. However, the principal is not a voting member of the council.
- e) All meetings of a school council shall be open to the public.
- f) A school council is entitled to hold its meetings at the school.
- g) All meetings of a school council shall be held at a location that is accessible to the public.

- h) The principal of a school shall, on behalf of the school council, give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the meetings of the council to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.
- i) The notice required may be given by, giving the notice to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.

10. Schedule, Notice of Meetings, Call for Agenda Items and Posting of Minutes

- a) The Equinox School Council shall establish and communicate the schedule of School Council meetings as soon as is practical after the election of Council Members at the first council meeting of the school year (September). The schedule of council meetings shall be communicated to all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, administration and the community) through the use of email, the Equinox School Council web page and by posting on the school notice board.
- c) The School Council Executive shall circulate a notice of meeting and call for agenda items for a School Council meeting to the school community (stakeholders as above) at least two (2) weeks prior to the date of the meeting. A meeting agenda, with topics submitted for discussion by stakeholders and accepted by the School Council Executive, shall be circulated no later than three (3) business days before the scheduled date of the School Council meeting.
- b) Draft minutes of the previous Equinox School Council meeting shall be circulated to all stakeholders expeditiously following the meeting, preferably within five (5) business days of the meeting. The above-mentioned draft minutes shall be posted on the Equinox School Council web site, in the school office and on a community bulletin board within a day of being completed.

11. Committees

- a) A school council may establish committees to make recommendations to the council.
- b) All parent committees will be struck by council and report through council except when a committee needs to be convened by the Principal in order to address a school, board or Ministry requirement.
- c) Every committee of a school council must include at least one parent member of the council.
- d) The parent member of council representing the committee does not have to be chair of the committee.
- e) A committee of a school council may include persons who are not members of the council.
- f) All committee meetings shall be open to the public.
- g) A committee is entitled to hold its meetings at the school.
- h) All meetings of a committee shall be held at a location that is accessible to the public.
- i) The principal of a school shall, on behalf of the committee, give written notice of the dates, times and locations of the meetings of the council to every parent of a pupil who, on the date the notice is given, is enrolled in the school.
- j) The notice required may be given by giving the notice to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and posting the notice in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.

- k) Suggested committees: By-laws/Elections, Open House/Admissions, Communications, Interior Spaces, Green Team, Events, Fundraising, Holistic Learning, Volunteer Co-ordination, Class Rep Co-ordination and any other committee that council deems appropriate.

12. Voting

- a) Each member of a school council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the council. School Council Executive members do not acquire an extra vote by virtue of being elected first as parent members and then as School Council Executive members.
- b) Each member of a committee of a school council is entitled to one vote in votes taken by the committee.
- d) The principal of the school is not entitled to vote in votes taken by the school council or by a committee of the school council.

13. Conflict of Interest

- a) A conflict of interest refers to a situation in which private interests or personal considerations may affect a member's judgment in acting in the best interest of the School and the School Council. It includes using a member's position, confidential information, school materials, or school facilities for private gain or advancement or the expectation of private gain or advancement. A conflict may occur when an interest benefits any of the member's family members, friends or business associates.
- b) In the event that a member has an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest with respect to a matter under consideration at a meeting of the School Council, the member shall:
- Declare the conflict of interest at the beginning of the meeting and before the matter is discussed;
 - Refrain from participating in the discussion of the matter;
 - Refrain from voting on the matter; and
 - Refrain from attempting to influence another member of the School Council Executive before, during or after the consideration of the matter.
- c) The declaration of the conflict of interest shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- d) Nothing in this Article shall be construed to limit the ability of parents to advocate on behalf of their children.

14. Conflict Resolution

- a) All members of the Equinox school community are expected to abide by the standards of behaviour set out in the Parent Handbook.
- b) Disagreement on issues under discussion by the School Council does not constitute conflict. School Council discussions are enriched when they are informed by a diversity of perspectives and opinions.
- c) For the purposes of these bylaws, disagreement on issues under discussion becomes conflict when any member of School Council or the broader school community, through actions or language, defames, insults, belittles, disparages, threatens, or in any way harms another member of the

school community, or engages in any course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably be known to be unwelcome.

- d) When conflict occurs, the parties involved are encouraged to address the conflict through direct and open dialogue.
- e) If the conflict cannot be resolved in this way, the Chair or a Co-chair may be approached to:
 - Meet with the parties to facilitate a discussion; or
 - Attempt to resolve the conflict through independent mediation, a restorative practice process, or any mutually agreeable means.
 - If the conflict cannot be resolved through the above means, the principal or the vice-principal may take next steps deemed necessary under the regulations of the Toronto District School Board.
- f) Nothing in these bylaws shall be construed to limit the right of any community member:
 - to exercise his or her rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, other laws of Ontario or Canada, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, or applicable collective agreements; or
 - to pursue a remedy through legal action.

15. Minutes and Financial Records

- a) A school council shall keep minutes of all of its meetings and records of all of its financial transactions.
- b) The minutes and records shall be available at the school for examination without charge by any person.

16. Principal

- a) The principal of a school may delegate any of his or her powers or duties as a member of the school council, including any powers or duties under this Regulation, to a vice-principal of the school.
- b) The Principal shall:
 - I. Act as a resource person to the school council, and assist the council in obtaining information relevant to its functions, including information relating to relevant legislation and policies.
 - II. Solicit the views of the school council with respect to:
 - School policies and guidelines that relate to student achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents.
 - A local code of conduct and a local student dress code.
 - New education initiatives that relate to students or to the accountability of the education system to parents.
 - School action plans for improvement based on EQAO results and communication of those plans to the public.
 - III. Consider each recommendation made by the council and advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation. Distribute the school council's annual report to every parent/guardian and post it in an accessible location.
 - IV. Distribute materials intended for school councils from the Ministry of Education to school council members and post them in an accessible location.

- V. Give written notice of the elections to parents at least 14 days before the election and post such notice in an accessible location.
- VI. Attend every meeting of the school council.

17. Advisory Authority of School Councils

- a) A school council may make recommendations to the principal of the school or to the TDSB on any matter. The principal shall consider each recommendation made by the council and advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.

18. Duty of the Board to Respond

- a) The TDSB shall consider each recommendation made to the board by the council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.

19. Consultation with Parents

- a) A school council shall consult with parents of pupils enrolled in the school about matters under consideration by the council.
- b) It is expected that any advice provided to the school principal or TDSB will be based on the general views of the school community and the best interests of all the students in the school.

20. Annual Report

- a) Every school council shall annually submit a written report on its activities to the principal of the school and to the board that established the council.
- b) If the school council engages in fundraising activities, the annual report shall include a report on those activities.
- c) The principal shall, on behalf of the 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.
- d) This may be done by, giving the report to the parent's child for delivery to his or her parent; and posting the report in the school in a location that is accessible to parents.

21. Changing By-laws

- a) Changing by-laws requires proper community consultation. Proposed changes must be presented at a council meeting in addition to being sent home to the community. Proposed changes may be voted in by members of council at the following council meeting after proper community feedback has been obtained.

These By-Laws were approved by School Council on June 10, 2015.

Reference Documents: Ontario Education Act 612/00; Ministry of Education's School Councils: A Guide for Schools (2001, revised 2001); TDSB Summary of School Council Regulations #612, #613 (2001), TDSB Parent and Community Involvement, Policy p.023 SCS; TDSB Parent and Community Involvement Operational Procedure PR.228 SCS; Education Act 613.