

Henry Larsen Elementary School: School Council Constitution

1. Name

The name of the school council for Henry Larsen Elementary School in Ottawa, Ontario is Henry Larsen Elementary School Council (also referred to as “Council”).

2. Purpose and Objectives

The Henry Larsen School Council is a parent-led team that works to ensure Henry Larsen Elementary School remains a vibrant and enriching learning environment that promotes student success. Council may discuss and make recommendations on all school matters and engage in activities aimed at contributing to the quality of education and the overall experience of students at Henry Larsen Elementary School.

School Council tries to enrich the lives of the students by a variety of activities, including, but not limited to:

- providing advice on issues affecting students (both to the school and to the Board) such as school improvement planning, school-based services and community partnerships (e.g. lunch programs), school budget priorities, and input on the principal profile
- strengthening home-school communication
- encouraging the active participation of parents in the school
- creating opportunities to bring together parents, teachers and students in an informal environment (special events)
- providing a forum for parents, students, staff and community members for input, discussion, communication and involvement on matters related to the school
- communicating with parents regarding council activities and decisions
- fundraising for items not covered or fully covered by the Board in support of physical education, music, library, academic programs, school events as well as school yard improvements
- approving and overseeing the Council’s own annual budget

3. Affiliations

The School Council is affiliated with the Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC).

4. Membership

Membership on School Council is open to all parents/guardians of students enrolled at Henry Larsen, staff at Henry Larsen as well as community members. Involvement in Council can mean anything from attending monthly meetings, being a full voting member, serving on the Executive, or helping with one of many Council-sponsored events or fundraising activities that benefit students and their educational experience.

4.1 Composition

The School Council is composed of the following people:

- 6-24 parent members as voted on by the School Council
- The Principal and/or Vice-Principal of the school (non-voting)
- 1 teacher employed in the school, other than the Principal or Vice-Principal, elected by his/her peers
- 1 non-teaching employee of the school elected by his/her peers (optional);
- 1 or 2 community representatives appointed by the school council (optional);
and
- 1 student representative appointed by the Principal (optional)

Since parents form the majority of a School Council, the Council will be considered duly constituted if optional members are not part of Council or do not attend the meetings (as long as there is quorum). Quorum is achieved when a majority of Council members are in attendance at the meeting and a majority of the members are parents/guardians.

Representatives of the community must not have children attending the school as they are meant to represent the community and not the children attending the school.

As meetings are public events, anyone may attend the meetings but must be a council member in order to vote on issues.

4.2 School Council Positions

The Executive Team of the School Council will consist of, at minimum:

- Chair or Co-Chairs
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Principal/Vice-Principal

Other positions may include:

- Webmaster (for improving and maintaining the council website)

- Fundraising Coordinator (to manage fundraising activities)
- Communications Coordinator (to write newsletter items and promote events)
- Volunteer Coordinator (to organize volunteers for large events)
- Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) Representative (to represent council at meetings and to report back to council on OCASC activities)

The same person may hold two of the above mentioned positions if required. Executive Members may meet separately as required to enable the success of full meetings of Council.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Chair or Co-Chairs

- Presides over Council meetings
- Prepares the agenda for Council meetings
- Reports regularly on Council activities to the school community, and prepares a written report on Council activities for the Board in cooperation with the Treasurer
- Represents the Council to outside bodies and authorities
- Communicates with the school administration on behalf of Council
- Ensures that documents are filed and made available upon request
- Acts as a signing authority for Council
- Reviews Treasurer reports prior to each meeting to ensure financial statements are in order.

Treasurer

- Is responsible for oversight of the finances of the Council in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)
- Receives, pays out, and keeps accounts of all Council funding and approved expenses
- Prepares regular financial statements subject to annual audits by the Board
- Prepares a draft of the annual budget of Council for discussion with Members
- Provides financial report updates to the Council at every meeting
- Provides input to Council on financial matters, e.g., the affordability of initiatives
- Provides an accounting of Council finances at least annually and serves as liaison with auditors as required
- Cooperates with the Chair or Co-Chairs in preparing a written report on Council activities for the Board
- Acts as a signing authority for Council

Secretary

- Maintains an accurate account of all meetings including attendance, motions and action items
- Prepares and distributes minutes of Council meetings
- Drafts correspondence resulting from specific decisions made by the Council
- Keeps a file of official documents
- Ensures safe-keeping and accessibility of minutes and records for the current year and for the preceding four years

Parent Representatives

- Contribute to school and school council discussions
- Solicit views of other parents/guardians and community members to share with the council
- Participate on council committees
- Observe the council's code of conduct and constitution
- Encourage parents/guardians and community members to participate in events and programs

Community Representative

- Contribute to school and school council discussions
- Represent the community's perspective and helps build partnerships and links between the school and the community
- Participate on council committees
- Observe the council's code of conduct and constitution
- Encourage parents/guardians and community members to participate in events and programs

School Staff Representatives

- Contribute to school and school council discussions
- Solicits views from staff to share with the council
- Submits funding requests to Council on behalf of staff
- Participates on council committees
- Observes the council's code of conduct and constitution
- Communicates with staff on behalf of the council

Student Representative

- Contribute to school and school council discussions
- Solicit views of students to share with the council
- Participate on council committees
- Observe the council's code of conduct and constitution
- Communicate with students on behalf of the council

4.4 Election Process

Elections must be held within the first 30 days of the new school year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Only those attending the AGM shall be allowed to vote. Voting by proxy will not be permitted.

Each parent or legal guardian seeking election must be nominated or self-nominated and must have a child registered at the school. Parent members of the School Council shall be voted on by parents or acclaimed where there are fewer than 14 members wishing to be members. (Note: A parent member is any parent or legal guardian of a student enrolled in the school.) If voting is required, each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school shall be entitled to one vote for each position on the School Council

The teaching staff member shall be chosen by teaching staff at the school. A non-teaching staff member, if included, will be elected or acclaimed through a process decided on by the principal. Community members, if included, will be appointed by the new School Council each fall. The student representative shall be appointed by the Principal, with the consent of the School Council.

The Executive Team (Chair, Co-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) must be elected from amongst parent members.

All School Council members are voting members and have equal voting rights except the Principal/Vice-Principal who participate(s) in council activities as a non-voting member.

If voting is required, the election committee, composed of some or all of the previous year's Council members, shall:

- Ensure that the school community is notified of nominees, voting procedures and date(s), location, and time, at least fourteen days in advance of voting; and
- Conduct the voting process.

The Council may set up subcommittees made up of interested persons and at least one Council parent member to:

- Conduct more detailed or in-depth work than is possible during Council meetings,
- Make recommendations to the Council, or
- Keep the Council informed of issues and developments in its particular area.

Each Committee Chair is appointed by the Council. The Committees established by the Council shall report their activities to the Council at each Council meeting and shall respond to any questions from the Council or parents in attendance at the meeting.

4.5 Term of Office

All Council members are elected, appointed or acclaimed for a one-year term, from the September election meeting of one year to the next. There is no limit to the number of terms that a Council member may serve provided he or she is duly re-elected or re-appointed each year. Co-chairs may serve for 2 years with an option of extending when there is no other show of interest.

Any member of the Council may, upon written notice, resign from membership in the Council. Any Council member who can no longer fulfill their responsibilities has an obligation to resign from the Council. In addition, absence of any Council member for three or more consecutive scheduled meetings without due cause satisfactory to the Chair, shall constitute a vacancy.

A vacancy in the membership of the Council does not prevent the Council from exercising its authority. If parent member positions need to be filled in order for Council to function in accordance with the applicable regulations, a replacement may be appointed or elected at a meeting of Council.

The School Council may terminate a membership of a School Council member by a two-thirds vote for:

- Inappropriate or detrimental behaviour
- Failure to perform their duties
- Misrepresentation of the school or the Council to a person, the press, or any other organization
- Misrepresentation to the School Council
- Illegal or unlawful conduct

This termination is subject to notice and to an opportunity to be heard by the Council.

5.0 Meetings

5.1 Regular Council Meetings

Meetings of the Council shall be held no less than four times per school year, to be determined by the Chair. In general, meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month, each month of the school year. The first meeting of Council must be held within 35 days of the start of the school year but after the elections (or on the same day with

elections being the first order of business). All regular meetings of the Council are open to the public. Appropriate notice of meetings will be given.

All meetings will be run in accordance with the School Council Code of Conduct (Appendix A). No one may be excluded from the meeting except for disruptive behaviour.

Special or unscheduled meetings of the School Council may be held at the call of the Chair or on the written request of three or more members of the Council. The Executive must ensure that appropriate notice is given for these meetings.

Members of Council shall make reasonable efforts to attend all meetings. Quorum is achieved when a majority of Council members are in attendance at the meeting and a majority of the members are parents/guardians. Quorum is required for any voting decisions although consensus is the preferred model for making decisions. This allows all members to contribute to the solution and promotes a sense of common purpose.

5.2 Executive Team Meetings

The Executive Team may meet separately from Council if required. The quorum for an Executive Team meeting is three, one of which must be the Chair/Co-Chair, and one the Principal or Vice-Principal. Any decision or action taken as a result of the Executive Team meeting must be reported at the next School Council meeting.

5.3 Meeting Procedures

Notice of the Council meetings should be given at least one week in advance. The Chair shall set agendas.

Both the minutes of the last meeting and the agenda for the upcoming meeting shall be available to all Council members ahead of the meeting. Minutes and agendas can only be approved and seconded by School Council members.

All parent/guardian attendees are encouraged to participate in the decision-making process, and their views will be considered along with those of the voting School Council members.

Wherever possible, decisions at the meetings shall be made by consensus by attending Council members and parents. However, in those instances where consensus cannot be attained, any Council member or other parent in attendance may propose a motion. The Chair shall call for a seconder for the motion, and invite discussion prior to the vote being taken.

A vote other on an amendment of the Constitution shall be decided by a 2/3 majority while all other votes are decided by a simple majority of the School Council members.

Upon request by any voter in attendance, votes shall be cast by ballot.

All meeting minutes, agendas, annual reports and newsletters for the current year must be available at the school or on the school website.

5.4 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived, or potential. Conflicts of interest occur in matters that Council members, members of their families, or business entities in which they may have an interest, stand to benefit financially either directly or indirectly by decision of the Council. This includes the acceptance of favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the school. Where a conflict of interest exists, the implicated Council member must declare the conflict and may not engage in any related deliberations or votes.

5.5 Conflict Resolution

The School Council will undertake to resolve all internal conflicts within its mandate in a timely manner. The School Council believes that its operation can be conducted based on mutual respect in the interest of students and the school community.

All participants are encouraged to follow the School Council Code of Conduct. All participants are expected to exercise their role with positive attitude in a democratic manner to minimize conflict. However, from time to time a dispute may arise. It is expected that the School Council will make every effort to resolve it. The School Council will abide by any conflict resolution policy issued by the Board. It is the responsibility of the Chair to facilitate the resolution of conflict.

6.0 Annual Report

An annual report must be prepared at the end of the school year and distributed the following September. It must be posted and distributed to all parents and guardians of students enrolled at the school. It must include financial statements and be submitted to the OCDSB's CFO in accordance with financial reporting requirements.

7.0 Financial Matters

The Council must disclose the purpose of all fundraising activities to all students, parents and members of the public who provide funds, resources or effort for the purpose or benefit of the fundraising activity.

Money raised through fundraising, sponsorships and donations will be deposited into the School Council's bank account by the Treasurer or designate. Money raised at a fundraiser should be counted by at least two members to ensure accountability.

All cheques will be signed by the Treasurer and the Chair at the time the expense is being paid. Other officers of the Council may have signing authority on the accounts as back up as determined by the Chair. Blank cheques will not be signed in advance.

All expenditures paid out of funds raised by the Council should be decided at a School Council meeting. The Treasurer shall report on intakes and expenditures at each regular meeting. Receipts must be submitted for reimbursement and financial accountability; where not available, this can be approved by a majority vote of School Council members.

In an emergency and between regular meetings, the Executive Committee may approve the expenditure of Council funds up to \$300. The Treasurer shall report on the issue and decision at the next regular meeting.

Annual financial statements will be prepared each September. The fiscal year shall be from September 1 to August 31 of the following year.

7.0 Signing Authority

Any formal communication from the School Council where the communication advances a specific position must be signed by the Chair and must be approved by council members.

8.0 Constitutional & Bylaw Amendments

Any proposed changes or additions to the Constitution of the Henry Larsen Elementary School Council must be broadly communicated to the parent community two weeks in advance of the meeting at which a vote will be held. Amendments must be by approval of a motion by a two-thirds majority.

9.0 Effective date

This Constitution takes effect on the date on which it is adopted by the School Council. Adopted by the Henry Larsen Elementary School Council on XXXXXXXX.

Resources

The Education Act, 1998, s. 170 (1), 17.1 and 170 (3)

Ontario Regulation 612/00, School Council Regulation and Ontario Regulation 613/00, Regulation to Amend Regulation 298.

OCDSB School Council Welcome Package

Sample School Council Constitutions/By-laws (posted electronically)

Board Policy P.014.SCO: School Councils

Board Policy P.012.CON: Community Use of Schools

Board Policy P.052.SCO: Fund-raising in Schools

Board Policy P.104.SCO: Student Dress Code

Board Policy P.067.SCO: Volunteers

Board Procedure PR.616.FIN: Accounting for School-Generated Funds

Board Procedure PR.540.SCO: Fund-raising in Schools

Board Procedure PR.555.SCO: Volunteers

Appendix A

School Council Code of Conduct

This code of conduct proposes to lay out guidance for school council members

- Consider the best interest of all students and maintain a school-wide perspective.
- Show respect for all members of council.
- Respect the time of other council members by keeping comments on-topic and of reasonable length.
- Respect the agenda and realize that some topics are better discussed off-line or may need to be deferred to the next meeting.
- Limit discussions at meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
- Encourage a positive environment in which all contributions are encouraged and valued.
- Encourage all members to participate in meetings.
- Make recommendations but recognize that the administration of the curriculum and the conduct of school business shall be left to the principal, the vice-principal, the superintendent and the board.
- Use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.
- Work with other council members in a spirit of cooperation in spite of differences of opinion.
- Act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of the school council.
- Maintain the highest standards of integrity.
- Recognize and respect the integrity of all members of the school community.
- Treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.
- Acknowledge democratic principles and accept consensus.
- Base personal decisions on all available facts in each situation and vote with honest conviction.
- Respect the confidential nature of some school business and understand limitations this may place on council.
- Do not disclose confidential information.
- Declare any conflicts of interest.
- Do not benefit financially due to your council involvement.