School Council Basics

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PIAC Toronto District School Board
Parent Involvement Advisory Committee

Supporting Parents as Partners in Education

Let's Chat School Councils!

- Regulations and Policies
- School Councils
- Funds and Fundraising
- School Statement of Needs (SSON)
- PIAC (and elections)

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School Council Regulations

- School Councils are governed by the regulations outlined in the Ontario Education Act. *Ontario Regulations 612/00 and 613/00 (2001)*
- TDSB policies and procedures including:
  - Equity
  - Parent and Community Involvement
  - Funds and Fundraising etc.

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Attributes of Effective School Councils

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Inclusiveness
- Communication

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What is a School Council?

- A forum through which parents and other members of the school community can actively contribute to improving student achievement, school performance, and enhance accountability of the education system

  "The purpose of school councils is, through active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance accountability of the education system to parents" (*O. Reg 612/00 s2(1)*)

- A School Council is an advisory group (*O.Reg 612/00 s3.8*)
- A School Council may provide advice to the Principal and/or the School Board on any matter (*O.Reg 612/00 s20*)

Responsibilities of a School Council

- Develop by-laws and operating procedures
  - Bylaws: Formal documents that define the governance (standards & principles)
  - Operating Procedures: Describe the process for that governance - how tasks are carried out
- Record keeping
- Reporting
- Consultation
- Communication

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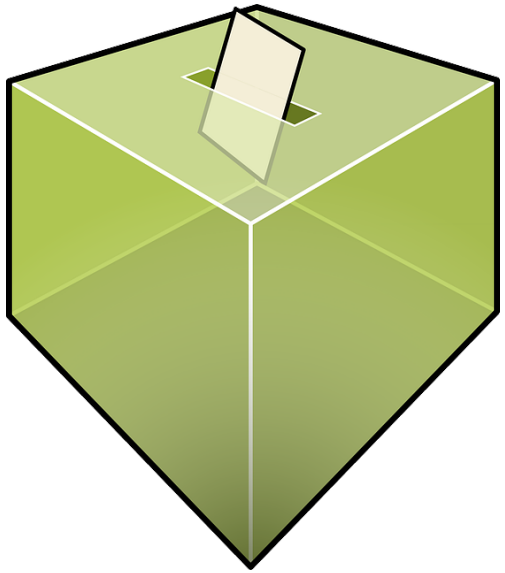
Elections

- Elections must be held within 30 days from the first school day in September
- The Principal shall notify the parent community 14 days before the election with details such as date, time, and location
- Election is to be done by secret ballot



By-laws and Operating Procedures

➢ As per *Reg. 612*, school council by-laws must include:

- Conflict Resolution
- Election Procedures & Filling Vacancies
- Conflict of Interest

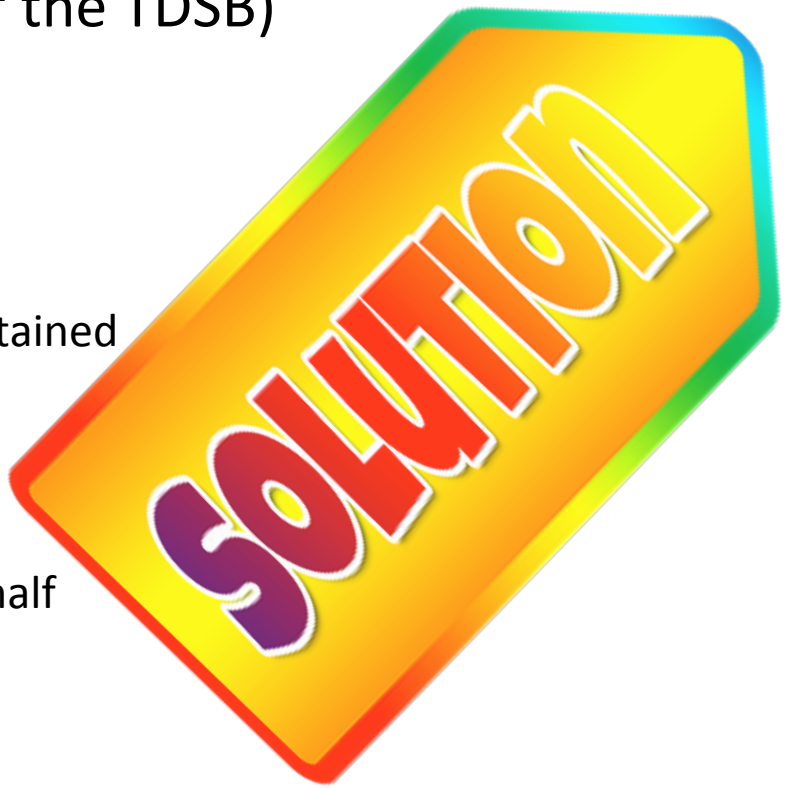
➢ Your by-laws or operating procedures may include:

- Code of Ethics
- Meeting Norms & Attendance
- Number of Members & Quorum
- Roles & Responsibilities of the Membership
- Requirements of the Signing Officers
- Establishment & Roles of Sub-committees/Working Groups
- Decision Making Process
- Communications Strategy
- Process for storage of and access to council minutes and other records
- Amending by-laws process

School Council Chairs/Co-chairs

- Every School Council is required to have a Chair or two (2) Co-chairs (cannot be an employee of the TDSB)

- Responsibility of the Chair(s)
  - Arrange and chair Council meetings
  - Prepare meeting agendas
  - Ensure minutes are recorded and maintained
  - Facilitate conflict resolution
  - Participate *ex-officio* on Council sub-committees/working groups
  - Communicate with the Principal on behalf of the Council (*vice versa*)



The Role of the Principal

- Principals are required to support school councils
- Role of the Principal
  - Ensures the school has an elected School Council
  - Act as a resource on laws, regulations and Board policies
  - Give notice of School Council meetings
  - Ensure elections are held in accordance with Ministry regulations
  - Attends School Council meetings
  - Distributes School Council information to the parent body
  - Seeks parent input on matters affecting student learning, school committees, dress code, code of conduct, SIP, EQAO results
  - Considers advice and provides a response to any recommendations of the School Council

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Running Effective Meetings

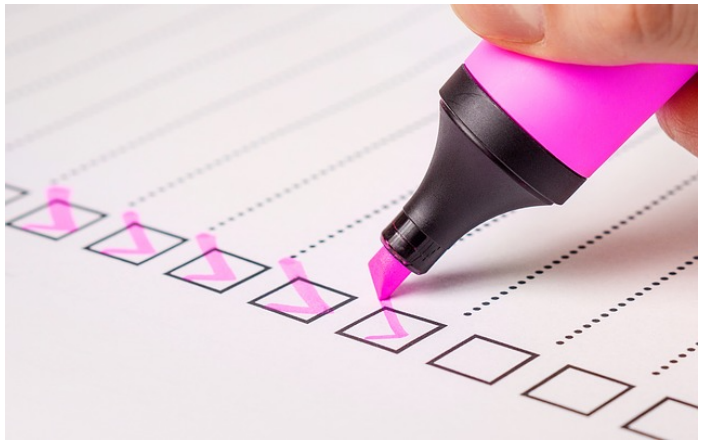
- ➢ Set dates and post a clear agenda in advance to encourage attendance
- ➢ Consider using PIAC's School Council's Monthly Checklist for content ideas
- ➢ Consider tech options for remote access of meetings to increase participation
- ➢ Equity
  - Consider whether your Council is representative of your school community; it is not about who shows up, but whether Council has provided every parent the ability to participate in decision-making and priority setting
  - Consider surveying your families
  - Consult your Principal about the School Profile to learn about your community
  - Seek translation of key engagement pieces

Running Effective Meetings

- Making decisions
  - Consensus decision making (inclusive)
  - Voting process (direct)
- TIP: Make your meeting worth attending
  - Define a meeting's purpose and set an agenda
  - Send enough information in advance for people to prepare for meeting
  - Allow all attendees to participate
  - Address each item on the agenda, staying on schedule & on topic
  - Assign and review action items (follow-up)
  - Summarize decisions made to avoid misunderstandings
  - Finish on time and thank all for attending
  - Follow-up promptly with meeting minutes

Minutes and Record Keeping

- Minutes must be recorded for every meeting of Council, including sub-committees
- Retain records for four (4) years and make them accessible to all parents
  - Hard copies stored in a file at the school office
  - Electronic minutes can be stored digitally on School Council/school website
- Minutes should contain:
  - Date of the meeting
  - List of who attended/apologies
  - Brief summary of the meeting
  - Motions and decisions/votes of the Council
  - Financial decisions of the council
  - Action and follow-up items



Required Reporting

- School Councils need to submit an Annual Report on all activities
- Principal shares this report with the parent community and with the School Board
- TDSB requires:
  - Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) report
  - School Statement of Needs (SSON)
  - Fundraising Plan (can be adjusted throughout the year)

Parent Consultation

- School Councils must consult with their parent community on issues being considered by School Council
- Formal consultation:
  - Dress code
  - Code of conduct
  - School improvement plans (SIPs)
  - Safe school plans
  - Budget and issues with school-wide impact
- Informal consultation:
  - Expenditures of school council funds
  - Field trips
  - Lunchroom issues
  - Change in entry/dismissal times

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Parent Consultation

➢ How do I consult my school community?

- Special issue-based meetings with votes (direct) or consensus (inclusive)
- Surveys
- Request for opinions
- Focus groups
- Informal small group discussions

School Council Consultation

- Schools are encouraged to include School Council representative(s) on all committees it establishes
- Mandatory
  - Caring and Safe Schools Committee
  - Staffing Committee
  - Budget Committee (budget must support curriculum objectives)
  - School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Optional
  - Curriculum Committee
  - Fundraising Committee
  - Election Committee

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Communications

- Develop a communications plan that complies with Board policies
- Use a multi-platform/multi-media approach to communicate
  - Monthly newsletters
  - Pamphlets and flyers
  - Attendance at school functions
  - Email distribution lists
  - Telephone trees
  - School Council display/notice board in a central public location in the school
  - Social Media
  - Playground updates

Let's Chat School Councils!

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Funds

- TDSB funds: $1.25/student ($300-$1000). Usage determined by the School Council
- MoE funds: $500 geared to reaching parents who are not accessing council/school activities. Usage determined by the School Council. Due Dec
- Parent Reaching Out (PRO) grant (up to $1000). No release date
- TDSB Business Development Offices has researched a number of **grants that councils** may explore. To access, Chairs must request that the school activate the School Council TDSB e-mail account and the list is accessible from here
- Continuing Education parent workshop funds currently unavailable

Fundraising

- Fundraising activities must be conducted in accordance with TDSB policies and guidelines
- Funds raised by the School Council/assets purchased with those funds belong to the Board
- Fundraising monies cannot be used in the delivery of curriculum or a safe learning environment. Parent community should be consulted on fundraising expenditure
- P021-Fundraising Policy & School Generated Funds Procedure parent consultation (via PIAC) is in November
- Community Use of Board Facilities Policy will include permit fee waiver for school council meetings and council meeting-related activities (e.g. sub-committee meetings, Executive meetings)

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School Statement of Needs (SSON)

- Outlines what is unique about your school community
- Used by the Superintendent when there is a change of administrator in your school
- Completed by the School Council/parent/guardian representative and submitted to the Superintendent October 31
- Guides and templates available at torontopiac.com

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School Council Resources

- The School Council Toolkit
  - Elections
  - By-laws and Operating Procedures
  - Running Effective Meetings
  - Minutes and Record-Keeping
  - The Role of the Principal
  - Funds and Fundraising
  - Monthly School Council Checklist

  Download at http://bit.ly/2HnoH88
- Toronto PIAC
- A **lot** of relevant templates at torontopiac.com
- Parent and Community Engagement Office (PCEO)

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What is PIAC?

- PIAC is a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) established by the Ministry of Education to formally advise the TDSB on parent engagement
- PIAC is comprised of:
  - Parent representatives from the Board's 22 Wards
  - Two Co-chairs
  - A Trustee Representative
  - The Director of Education
  - Representatives from Community Liaison Groups

- PIAC's work is supported by the Parents & Community Engagement Office (PCEO)

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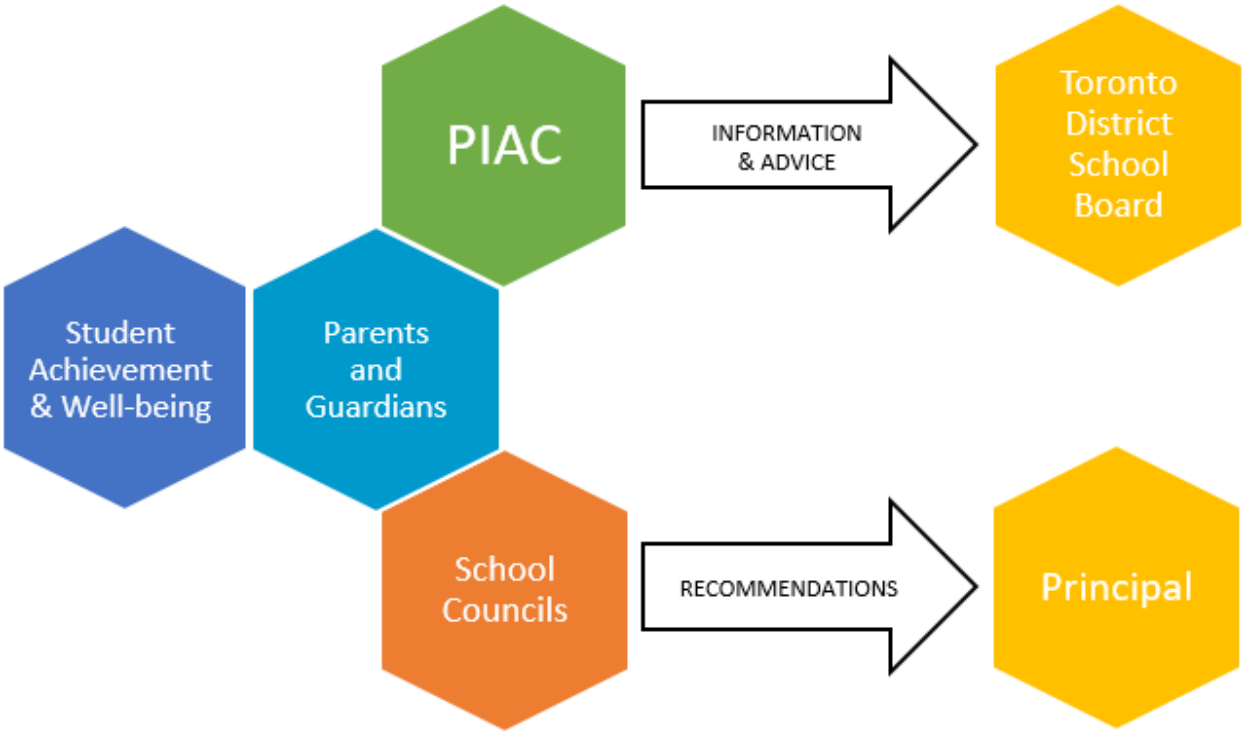
How does PIAC fit within the TDSB?



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What Does PIAC do?

- Liaison between parents and the TDSB
- Aid access to TDSB information and resources for parents
- Support more effective parent engagement
- Provide information and advice on parent engagement to the Board
- Enhance accountability of the education system
- Offer parent input on Board policies and procedures
- Support school councils

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PIAC Member Role

- Parent liaison between Ward and PIAC:
  - Seek opinions of the Ward
  - Share PIAC information with the Ward
  - Share school council best practices
  - Bring Ward information & concerns to PIAC
  - Connect with Trustee & Superintendent of the Ward
  - Identify and reduce barriers to parent engagement to improve student achievement and wellbeing (in your Ward and across the Board)
- Must live in the Ward, or have a child who lives in or attends a school in the Ward they represent
- Two-year membership
- For more information contact info@torontopiac.com

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PIAC Member Role

- Attend monthly PIAC meetings (call-in available)
  - Discuss TDSB policies, procedures and initiatives, and make recommendations on parent engagement
  - Discuss new developments in the Provincial education system
  - Discuss opportunities for parent engagement
  - Discuss Working Group activities
  - Recommend how funding should be used for parent involvement
- Attend Ward council meetings
- Attend PIAC training sessions
- Attend & support PIAC events
- Must join a PIAC Working Group (call-in available)

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How to Get Involved With PIAC

- Visit our website at **www.torontopiac.com** for information, resources and important dates
- Attend a monthly PIAC meeting
- Join at least one PIAC Working Group
- Attend a PIAC event!
- Attend your local Ward meetings

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