

Green Learning Academy

Parent Council Handbook

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PARENT OPERATIONS - What Do Parent Councils Do?

Schools operated by a board of directors must have a parent council. The majority of the members of a parent council must be parents of students attending the school. The school council may, at its discretion, advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school.

Parent council helps facilitate the development of a common vision for the school. Members work together to facilitate communication, planning, and resource allocation regarding priorities and programs that are needed in the school community. Parent council does not manage the day-to day operations of the school.

Parent council respects the roles of the school staff. Parent council neither governs the school, nor involves them selves directly in determining professional practices.

At a meeting that has no elected executive, the principal must decide who is to act as the chair and who is to act as the secretary.

PARENT COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The school council must consist of a majority of parents with children attending the school and:

- The principal of the school
- At least one teacher
- At least one parent of ECS children enrolled in the school or a non-parent community member with an interest in the school.

FIRST PARENT COUNCIL MEETING OF THE YEAR - Mandatory

The first parent council meeting of the year is mandatory and must be held no later than 30 days after the start of the school year, or as specified in the parent council by-laws. This meeting will be called by the school authorities if no date has been set by the previous council. The first meeting is to agree with the school act in having an overall representation of the school population. These first meetings must include the following; elections, calendar approval, review of by-laws, and the setting of dates and times of council meetings. Major decisions are made for the school year at the first mandatory meeting. People unable to attend may send a proxy or submit their votes at least 24 hours in advance.

THE 1ST MEETING OF THE PARENT COUNCIL - Members Must:

- Have overall representation of the school population.
- Review duties of the executive officers.

- Elect executive council, including but not limited to chairperson, vice chair, secretary, board representative and fundraising chairperson.
- Revisit the mission statement.
- Review of the by-laws of the past parent council and review how to change the by-laws.
- Review internal conflict resolution procedures that address problems that arise among school council members and the wider community, and between the school council and the school staff.
- Determine the number of meetings to be held by parent council.
- Select members of the community businesses to sit on council, if council so wishes.

DEFINITIONS

Parent council can be referred to as council.

Executive council will always be specified as executive council.

School board is usually referred to as board. Therefore board meeting and board members refer to the meetings of and people who sit on, the school board.

GREEN LEARNING ACADEMY PARENT COUNCIL BY-LAWS

a) Checklist for Enabling, Implementing and Maintaining Parent Council

Parent council must maintain the following:

- A friendly school environment.
- Administrative commitment and support.
- Well-defined communication structure.
- Enabling school board policy.
- Positive school experiences.
- Knowing how to be involved.

b) Parent Councils Purposes

Parent council members consider these factors in their work to enhance the educational experience for students, and allow the school to achieve success.

- Meaningful parent involvement.
- A positive and supportive learning environment.
- Enhanced opportunities for staff development.
- Community involvement.

c) Practices to Avoid

Parent councils should avoid such practices as:

- Making policies that violate school board policy.

- Taking on the role of the teacher, principal or school board, each of has professional and legal responsibilities within the school system.
- Overstepping the limits of their assignments or their expertise.
- Discussion of parent council issues on school grounds if a parent council meeting is not in session.

d) Members of Parent Council

Each parent council must consist of the following members:

- The principal.
- At least one teacher from the school.
- Parents of students enrolled in the school.

e) Right to Vote at a Meeting

Only persons who attend the meeting or follow the proxy/submitted vote procedure and are:

- Parents of students enrolled in the school.
- Parents of children enrolled in an Early Children Services program at the school.
- Each “family” is entitled to one, not one vote per “child”.
- Members of Parent Council

f) Quorum

Parent council must have 5 school voting parents in attendance to have an actual meeting. No business may be conducted if a quorum is not present. If a quorum is present, (even if it only consists of 5 parents) any business conducted at that meeting is deemed official and binding.

g) Model of Governance

Parent council runs on an “Assembly/Town Hall Model”. Most decisions are made at regular open meetings of the entire school community, and officers of the parent council act only to carryout the wishes of the assembly.

Parent council follows Robert’s Rules of Order in conducting their meetings.

h) Suspension of Parent Council

If a quorum is not available for a meeting of parent council and the meeting has been rescheduled on 2 or more occasions, the board may suspend the operation of the parent council until the following year.

If the operation of parent council is suspended, the principal may establish an advisory committee to carry out the duties of the school council until a new parent council is established.

If the operation of parent council is suspended a new council must be established not later than 60 days after the start of the next school year.

i) Responsibility of Advising and Consulting

At times the Board or School authority may ask for parent council's ideas and opinions to assist them in making decisions. The exchange of ideas and opinions is a very important part of parent council. The Board and School officials make decisions based on what is best for all students. They have the authority to overrule council but will inform council of the basis of their decision when doing so.

Advice and consultation may be asked on the following items:

- Parent volunteers
- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Possible disciplinary actions
- School policy
- Parent Council policy
- Calendar
- Time schedule
- School budget
- Possible selection criteria for school staff
- Methods of reporting
- Methods of communicating with the public
- Promotion of the school in the community
- Programs and clubs to be offered in the school
- Extracurricular activities offered in the school
- Standards of student conduct

Parent council may not incorporate itself. The school is incorporated and parent council is intended to work together with the school.

j) Contacting the School Board

The Board should be contacted, and will address any of the following:

- Appeal and/or conflict resolution procedures between the principal and parent council.
- Procedures for filing a report summarizing the activities of the parent council in the school year and a financial statement, if applicable.
- Procedures in the event that a board suspends the operation of parent council.

k) Public Notice of Special Meetings

If a special meeting needs to be called, notification of that meeting must be made in at least three (3) different ways.

Notice of the special meeting:

- Can be advertised in a publication that is circulated to the general public of the school.
- Can be posted in three (3) or more locations that are accessible to the public.
- May go home with students.
- Posted on the website.
- Sent via email

It is advisable that teachers attend the parent council meetings. While the general public may attend the meetings, only school parents may vote. Community involvement is decided by the school parents in parent council by-laws.

l) Majority Decision

Parent council must reflect what the majority wants. Parent council does not make unilateral decisions about what happens in the school. They are participants in the decision-making process along with teachers, the principal and the school board. Ultimately the principal and the school board must ensure that decisions made are in the best educational interest of all the students in the school.

m) Fees Prohibited

No parent council shall be charged a fee for the use of the school or school facilities for the purpose of holding a meeting of the parent council.

n) Executive Council

Executive council consists of at least 4 members. Those four members are as follows;

Chairperson: The success of any meeting depends to a great extent on the type of Chairperson in charge. Their job is to have decisions arrived at quickly and as accurately as possible. A Chairperson should have a good personality, a strong and clear voice, a decided manner, a sense of humour and a constructive attitude. The Chairperson is responsible for calling all Parent Council meetings and presiding over them. They should meet with the other officials to prepare an agenda. Greater interest is aroused by announcing the purpose of each meeting. The agenda should be posted within 7 days of a council meeting occurring. The Chairperson is the only person who may call an emergency meeting of executive council. The Chairperson is to remain clinical and does not have a vote unless there is a tie.

Vice Chair: The chief duty of the Vice Chair is to preside at a meeting in the absence of the Chairperson. This person must be ready to step into the chairperson role at a moments notice. They should have a good knowledge of business procedure, keep well informed of all school activities and be prepared to assist and work with other members at any time. They are for all purposes the understudy of the chairperson. They are expected to keep in contact with the chairperson in regards to the agenda, special notices and other information. The discussions between a chairperson and vice chairperson are to remain confidential.

Secretary: In many organizations, the Secretary is the most important officer. The Secretary stands (1) to call the roll, (2) to read the minutes of the previous meeting, (3) and to read correspondence. These should be all given with a clear voice for everyone to hear.

In writing of the minutes, the Secretary should record the proceeding of the meeting which will include:

- a. Date and place of meeting
- b. Time of call to order
- c. Names of members present
- d. Names of mover and seconder in the confirmation of minutes
- e. All motions with the names of movers and seconders, and the action taken
- f. Unfinished business
- g. New business
- h. Results of votes and of elections
- i. Notes on discussions that may be useful for future meetings
- j. Time of adjournment

Minutes are to be submitted to the office with-in 7 days of the meeting taking place. Minutes may be submitted in electronic form (e-mail) or paper form (fax or hand delivery). The Secretary should also prepare a list of the business to be discussed at the next meeting and present this to the Chairperson before the meeting opens.

Treasurer: The Treasurer should be honest and dependable. The Treasurer is expected to keep accurate records of the Parent Council's finances and to report financial circumstances at meetings, when called upon by the Chairperson. A financial statement should be prepared for every annual meeting.

Board Representative: This person may attend Board meetings and report back to parent council things they deem are necessary for the council to be aware of. All issues discussed during a board meeting are to be deemed confidential. The report going back to parent council must be submitted to the board for approval with in 7 days of the board meeting taking place. This person is also used to bring forth parent council

advise, ideas and votes to the board. All parent council members must use their board representative or principal to convey messages to the board about parent council.

A person sitting on executive council has to remember that they represent the parents as a whole. They have access to all parents' phone numbers and emails and have the right to poll the group within reason. Sitting on executive council means that sometimes you may have to go against what you would like and do what the majority decides.

Any member of executive council found not to be doing their assigned roles may be recalled and another person put in their place, provided that the recall process is followed. Parent council may add to the number of people sitting on executive council as they deem necessary. Proper motion making procedure must be followed.

o) Making a Motion

Any member of parent council may make a motion. The member simply proceeds with whatever action they want taken by the words, "I move..." For example, "I move that parent council change the winter break from... to...."

In order for a motion to be placed on the floor for discussion or to be voted on someone must second it. The person who seconds the motion will say "I second the motion" and their name will be recorded.

At this point discussion on the motion is opened and people may voice their concerns, speak for or against the motion. The chairperson may cut off the discussion if she/he deems it to be unnecessary, repetitive or if time constraints are a concern.

Once discussion on the item has concluded the member of council present will vote on the motion. The vote must be recorded in the minutes by saying how many were in favor, how many were against and if anyone abstained.

Only one motion may be on the floor at a time. The secretary will inform the chairperson if a motion is brought forth before another motion has been dealt with.

p) Abstaining from a Vote

If a member of parent council feels they can not vote on a particular issue they may choose to abstain from that vote. We encourage all members to exercise their right to vote on motions and not abstain. Abstaining should be reserved for the following reasons:

- A conflict in interest arises from the motion on the floor. For example your company is the one parent council is voting on using. You abstaining would be a good choice since your vote could be looked upon as bias.

- The item being voted on goes against a cultural or religious belief that you have.
- The vote is concerning you or your position as a member of the council.
- Abstaining should not be used as a way of showing you are against the motion. If you do not agree with a motion, it is better to vote against it then abstain.

q) Going on the Record against a Motion

Any member of council may have the secretary record that they are against a motion. They simply request that their name goes on the record as going against the motion. Parent council reserves the right to record how each person voted if council deems it necessary.

r) Calling an Emergency Meeting

The chairperson is the only person who can call an emergency meeting. Emergency meetings are called on the basis of a decision that needs to be made before the next parent council meeting. An emergency meeting must have at least 3 of the 5 members of executive council present. All members present at the meeting must remember that they are representing the parents' wishes and ideas. Emergency notification must be done in at least three different ways. Email, telephone, fax, courier or person to person is acceptable.

s) Recalling a Member of Executive Council

A member of executive council may be recalled if they are found not to be following their role and/or responsibilities. Any member of parent council may initiate the recall process by informing parent council in writing at least 72 hours in advance of a parent council meeting of whom they wish to recall and on what grounds.

The recall of that person will now be placed on the agenda and must follow the public notification process. All parents must be made aware that a member of executive council has been nominated for recall.

Upon receipt of the written notification the chairperson must inform that member and the principal of the letter. Each person, the one being recalled and the one asking for the recall, will prepare a 3 minute statement speaking on behalf of their respective sides. Each will be asked to present them at the meeting. These statements maybe spoken, read (by the person or the acting chair) or presented in what ever fashion the person deems necessary. The chairperson will keep track of the time limit.

A 15 minute question and answer period will follow after the statements. Upon which time the chairperson will call for the vote. Each person that spoke must remove themselves from the room at voting time.

If the vote is for the executive member to be recalled that person will step down immediately and the principal will call upon someone to become an acting executive council member. The election to replace that person will occur at the following parent council meeting and proper public notification will be followed.

t) Fundraising Parent Volunteer Hours

Fundraising is a vital part of our school since and none of your tax dollars come to Green Learning Academy. Only funds in general revenue, tuition and funds raised are available to us to run the school. Therefore parent council has deemed it necessary for all parents to participate in fund raising events in some way. The Board will determine the number of hours needed for each family to put into the parent council approved event. This will then determine a dollar amount a cheque must be written for by each family.

Cheques are not cashed until the end of the fund raiser. If families have put in the required number of hours deemed necessary by parent council their cheques will be returned to them. If a family chooses not to participate then their cheque will be cashed and used to pay for people hired to help out with the fund raiser.

u) Proxy and Submitted Votes

People unable to attend a parent council meeting may send a proxy in their place. The proxy must have read the parent council handbook and understand that they are bound by it. Any items brought forth or voted on by the proxy will be deemed the responsibility of the person they are representing.

Submitted votes are allowed since the agenda is posted ahead of time. Votes must be placed in a sealed envelope and submitted to the chairperson or principal at least 24 hours in advance. It is the submitter's responsibility to check that their vote/s has been received. At the time of the vote the sealed envelope will be opened and read aloud. Envelopes that are opened before hand are considered spoiled and will not be counted.

v) Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are bound to occur in any tight knit family, such as our family here at Green Learning Academy. When a conflict occurs, a set procedure is in place.

The individual that you have a conflict with is the first point of contact. When you contact the person the conflict is with, you will follow the following conflict resolution process.

- 1) Ask permission - you must ask the person or persons for permission to talk about the item that is causing the conflict. eg. "I have an issue that I need to discuss with

you. When would be a good time?” It is acceptable for that person to say “not right now, but 3:45pm would be good.” A time must be set.

2) State only the facts – Say what happened as you saw it. No feelings are to be brought up. Sometimes you do not have the facts correct, or they are perceived differently. eg: I put my papers on this table and now they are gone. After lunch I saw you with them.” “I see how upset you look when you come into the parent council meetings.”

3) State how this makes you feel . You may not make accusations during this time. You may only state how it made you feel. eg: “It made me feel angry when I saw you had my papers. I felt like you had stolen from me.” or, “I feel concerned when you come into the meeting and look upset. I feel worried that I am doing something wrong.”

4) Allow the person to explain. “What do you think?” This is when the other person is able to talk and explain the facts differently, as they saw them and/or tells how they feel. eg: “I didn’t know that those were your papers. Mine look exactly the same. I understand why you would feel like I had taken something of yours. I would feel the same way if it happened to me. Maybe in the future we could write our names on our papers so that there will not be any confusion.” or, “I’m definitely not angry at you. Usually when I come into the parent council meeting I am getting prepared to discuss council issues, and I am not even conscious of you arriving. Please do not take offense to my facial expressions. If I do not make a point to talk to you, it means my concerns are not with you. I will in the future try to mask my face better but, if you are concerned just ask me.”

- Deal with only one issue at a time and in this manner only.
- Remember it is the” behavior” that is bothering you “not the person”.
- If you feel that you are unable to bring the conflict to the individual. You may take it to a higher level. However, you understand that in doing so, you forfeit your right to try to deal with the conflict on your own. You must now follow the direction of the higher authority. Whatever method the person involved chooses to reconcile the conflict, it is to be accepted.

All motions must be seconded and adopted by a majority vote unless otherwise noted.

All motions may be debated unless otherwise noted.

About Motions	Purpose of Motion	To Enact Motion
Main Motion	To take action on behalf of the body	Debatable; requires majority vote
Adjourn	End the meeting	Not debatable; immediately voted upon and requires majority vote
Call to Order	Ask for board attention Starts meeting	Not debatable; requires 1/3's majority vote
Call the Question	Closes debate and forces vote	Not debatable; requires 2/3's majority vote
Motion to Limit or Extend Debate	Limits or extends debate	Not debatable; requires 2/3's majority vote
Point of Order	Is a question about the process or a particular motion	Automatic if granted by Chair
Point of Information	To ask about the process or particular motion	Automatic
Motion to Withdraw	To withdraw a particular action	Requires 2/3's Majority vote to reverse results of earlier vote
Motion to Suspend the Rules	Suspend formal process for a short period	Debatable and requires 2/3's majority vote
Amend Motion	Used to add on to the motion	Requires 2/3's Majority vote

Notes: _____
