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St. Denis Catholic School Council By-Laws

ST. DENIS



Catholic School 

“PROUD TO BE A SAINT”

Principal J. Biamonte

175 Carlton St., St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1S1

Phone: 905-682-4156 Fax: 905-684-9586

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Introduction

In keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, Catholic School Councils support the Mission of Catholic Education and the Mission of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, by providing a communication link to parents/guardians, Principals/Vice-Principals, staff, students, school communities and the Board.

Catholic Education, in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, is the shared responsibility of all partners: the Board, the Bishop of St. Catharines, parish priests, staff, students, parents/guardians, and members of the community. The Mission Statement, Vision 2020 Statements, Strategic Directions and Enabling Strategies from the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan support parent/guardian engagement in the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

A Catholic School Council will be established in each elementary and secondary school in the Board to encourage the active participation of parents/guardians in Catholic Education, to improve student achievement of all student, and to enhance the accountability of the education system to all parents/guardians in the Board.

The Director of Education will issue Administrative Guidelines for the implementation of this Policy.

This reference guide has been developed to help St. Denis Catholic School Council (CSC) members fulfill their mandate in the most effective and efficient manner. This Guide offers a brief outline of the regulations governing Catholic School Councils (CSC) and what they mean for our council members, principal and the school board. It explains the roles and responsibilities of each partner and outlines the areas in which the school board and principals are required to consult with school councils.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witnesses of Christ.

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PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of the Catholic School Council, as an advisory body, through the active participation of parents/guardians is:
to advocate and strengthen Catholic Education
to improve student achievement and the well-being of students
to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians
to support the Mission Statement, Vision 2020 Statements, Strategic Directions and Enabling Strategies from the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan.

1.2 The Catholic School Council may provide recommendations to the Board and/or Principal on any matters that the Catholic School Council identifies as priorities and shall consult with parents/guardians about matters being considered by the Catholic School Council. Recommendations provided to the Board and/or Principal will represent the general views of the school community and the best interests of all students in the school. The Board and/or Principal shall consider each recommendation and shall advise the Catholic School Council of the action taken in response to the recommendation.

1.3 The Catholic School Council shall have an understanding of current Board policies and the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council to allow members to make meaningful contributions.

1.4 The Board will retain all the powers and duties as specified in the Education Act and its related Regulations.

1.5 Each Catholic School Council will bear the name “ St. Denis Catholic School Council”.

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2. CONSULTATION

2.1 Catholic School Councils shall be consulted by the Board and/or Principal for recommendations on new and revised policies and guidelines with respect to:

the student achievement of all students

the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians

the code of conduct (provincial and local)

the appropriate dress code for students (provincial and local)

the allocation of funding to the Catholic School Council

the fundraising activities by Catholic School Council members

the resolution of internal Catholic School Council disputes

the reimbursement of expenses of the Catholic School Council

the Board and school's action plans for improvement based on EQAO results and the communication of the plans to parents/guardians

the criteria and process for selection and placement of Principals and Vice-Principals

any new educational initiatives at the Board and school levels

the development of a plan for providing co-instructional activities

2.2 In addition, Catholic School Councils, may provide advice to the Board and/or Principal on any matters that the Catholic School Council identifies as priorities such as: the Catholic character of the school and/or the system the preparation of the school year calendar the development, implementation and review of all Board policies at the local level the involvement with the Parish and liturgical celebrations and sacraments Board and/or school policies regarding field trips for students school budget priorities the community use of school facilities fundraising activities participation in the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC) information and training sessions: curriculum , program goals and priorities the school mission statement, and other issues deemed appropriate by the Board

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3. COMPOSITION

The composition of the Catholic School Council will reflect the diversity of the school community.

3.1 Parents/guardians who support the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board shall form the majority of the Catholic School Council as specified in the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council. A parent/guardian, in respect of a Catholic School Council is a parent/guardian of a student who is enrolled in the school and includes a parent/guardian as defined in section 1 of the Education Act. In the case of a Catholic School Council in a school that is for adult students, students enrolled in the school may act as “parents” on a Catholic School Council.

3.2 A person is not qualified to be a parent/guardian member of the Catholic School Council if, he/she is employed at the school; or he/she is employed elsewhere by the Board and fails to take reasonable steps to inform persons qualified to vote of that employment

3.3 The Catholic School Council may choose to include other members as deemed appropriate to reflect the community of the school.

3.4 The Catholic School Council may appoint two (2) or more Community representatives as specified in the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council.

3.5 In accordance with the Catholic School Council By-Laws, one (1) parent/guardian who supports the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board will be elected as required for a term not to exceed two (2) years by the Catholic School Council, as the OAPCE Liaison Representative to the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) through the Niagara Catholic Regional OAPCE Director.

3.6 A parish priest or representative from the local parish or a designate from the community will represent the parish on the Catholic School Council.

3.7 One (1) secondary student representative enrolled in a Catholic secondary school, who is appointed by the student council, or in an elementary school one (1) student enrolled in the school, who is appointed by the Principal, after consulting with the Catholic School Council.

3.8 The Principal and/or Vice-Principal of the school.

3.9 One (1) teacher who is employed at the school elected by teachers

3.10 One (1) non-teaching staff member who is employed at the school elected by non-teaching staff.

3.11 Where appropriate, one (1) parent/guardian representative of a special needs child within the school may be appointed as a special needs advocate.

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4. ELECTIONS AND TERM OF OFFICE

- 4.1 Elections shall be held within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the start of the school year, on a date that has been selected by the current Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) of the Catholic School Council in consultation with the Principal of the school.
- 4.2 The Principal shall at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the election give written notice of the date, time, and location and availability of election forms to every parent/guardian who has a student enrolled at the school. This notification may be given by giving the notice to the students for delivery to parents/guardians and by posting the notice in the school that is accessible to parents/guardians.
- 4.3 Self-nominations are acceptable.
- 4.4 The elections must be organized by the school Principal and any retiring Catholic School Council members, if applicable, in a way that will ensure that all parents/guardians and staff have the opportunity to vote for their representatives. The election of parent/guardian members shall be by secret ballot.
- 4.5 Principals, with the assistance of the Catholic School Council election committee, are to review and finalize nominations, confirm names on ballots, run the election, and communicate the results.
- 4.6 The term of office for elected positions will be a one (1) year term, in order to encourage increased parent/guardian involvement and leadership. It is recommended that every Catholic School Council will include a statement in their By-Laws such as “that a term for elected officer positions of the Catholic School Council will not exceed two consecutive years”.
- 4.7 Students, staff and non-teaching staff will usually be appointed for a one (1) year term.
- 4.8 A member of a Catholic School Council may be re-elected or reappointed, unless otherwise provided by the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council.
- 4.9 Names and addresses, and contact information of the Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) of the Catholic School Council shall be forwarded to the Director of Education within thirty (30) days of the election.
- 4.10 Names of Catholic School Council members will be published to the school community by the Principal no later than thirty (30) days following the election.
- 4.11 For election purposes, each Catholic School Council may determine the maximum number of parent/guardian members to be elected as stated in the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council.
- 4.12 Members of the Catholic School Council will not receive an honorarium or payment for general expenses.

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5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

School councils have been created to enhance students' learning through the cooperative efforts of parents, students, staff members and others in the community.

The St. Denis Catholic School Council is an advisory body of volunteers who work together to provide ideas and opinions to help the principal make the school a better place for learning.

Accepting the role of school council member carries with it certain responsibilities. Each school council will define the roles and responsibilities of its members in its Constitution and By-Laws. The following are roles and responsibilities for specific positions:

Chair/Co-Chairs:

Prepare meeting agenda in consultation with the principal

Chair council meetings

Ensure that minutes of council meetings are recorded.

Report regularly on the status of council recommendations

Communicate regularly with school principal, council members, school community

Facilitate the resolution of conflict

Communicate with school principal on behalf of the council

Parent Representatives:

Bring a wealth of experience and diversity to council and help create a culture of sharing, communicating and dealing with issues and challenges

Participate on any committees established by the school council

Contribute to the discussions of the council

Maintain a school-wide perspective on school council issues and seek to achieve consensus

Solicit views of other parents and members of the community to share with council

Observe the council's code of ethics and established by-laws

School Principal (non-voting member)

Facilitate the operation of the Catholic School Council.

Attend every meeting of the Catholic School Council, or direct a designate.

Support and promote the Catholic School Council.

Seek input from the Catholic School Council.

Act as a resource on laws, regulations, Board policies and collective agreements.

Communicate with the Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) of the Catholic School Council as required.

Act as the secretary/treasurer of the Catholic School Council.

Prepare and present a Principal's Report at each Catholic School Council meeting including a financial statement of the Catholic School Council.

Ensure that copies of the minutes of the meetings are kept at the school and posted on the school website.

Assist the Catholic School Council in encouraging participation of all groups within the school community.

Cooperatively plan the agenda with the Catholic School Council Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) and forward to all Catholic School Council members a minimum of three (3) calendar days before the meeting date.

Maintain a full and accurate account of the proceedings and transactions of each Catholic School Council meeting.

Cooperatively plan the agenda with the Catholic School Council Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) and forward to all Catholic School Council members a minimum of three (3) calendar days before the meeting date.

Maintain a full and accurate account of the proceedings and transactions of each Catholic School Council meeting.

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6. MEETING PROCEDURES

6.1 Meetings will open and close with a prayer.

6.2 The Catholic School Council shall meet a minimum of four (4) times during the school year.

6.3 Meetings will commence on time and not last more than two (2) hours, unless the Catholic School Council agrees to a longer meeting as determined by the By-Laws.

6.4 All meetings of the Catholic School Council shall be held at the school and are open to members of the school community.

6.5 Catholic School Council meetings shall not proceed unless there is a quorum in attendance. A quorum is fifty percent plus one (50% + 1) of members, but at all times there must be a majority of parents/guardians at the meeting as well as the Principal and/or his or her designate.

6.6 Substitutes or proxies are not permitted.

6.7 The agenda for Catholic School Council meetings shall be distributed to all members a minimum of three days in advance of the meeting.

6.8 The Principal shall give written notice or post on the school website of the dates, times and location of the meetings of the Catholic School Council, to every parent/guardian of a student who, on the date the notice is given is enrolled in the school.

6.9 At the first meeting of the new school year, the parent/guardian members of the Catholic School Council shall elect a parent/guardian to serve as Chair and/or Co-Chair(s).

6.10 Minutes of the meetings are to be recorded and maintained at the school site, posted on the school website, and made available at the office of the school.

6.11 The Catholic School Council may establish committees to carry out specific functions and will seek widespread participation in these activities. Every committee of the Catholic School Council must include at least one (1) parent/guardian member.

6.12 The Catholic School Council shall use consensus, where possible as the usual method for developing recommendations and plans. If voting becomes necessary, a simple majority will be sufficient for a vote on any issue.

6.13 The Catholic School Council, in consultation with the Principal of the school, shall inform the general school and parent/guardian communities of its activities, through the school website and school newsletters.

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7. VACANCIES

7.1 The By-Laws of the Catholic School Council shall include the expectation that members attend Catholic School Council meetings regularly, and will include provisions for the Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) to determine the intent of members to continue serving on the Catholic School Council if absenteeism occurs on a regular basis.

7.2 There will be no discretionary removal of a duly elected or appointed Catholic School Council member before the end of his or her term.

7.3 If a vacancy of a parent/guardian member occurs, and only if this vacancy changes the simple majority of parents/guardians, notification will be given to all families and interested parents/guardians will be asked to submit their names to the Principal by a designated date. The Catholic School Council will hold an election in accordance with the By-Laws of the Catholic School Council.

7.4 Where a Catholic School Council member submits a letter of resignation or is absent from three (3) consecutive Catholic School Council meetings, the Catholic School Council may appoint a replacement to serve until the next election as per the Catholic School Council By-Laws (Member Absences and Attendance at Meetings).

7.5 If a vacancy of a community representative occurs, the Catholic School Council may request that the agency appoint another member, may choose a different organization, or, choose not to fill the position.

7.6 If a student, teacher or non-teaching representative vacancy occurs, the Principal shall arrange for a replacement where possible.

7.7 Individuals filling a vacated position shall hold the position until the term for that position expires.

7.8 A vacancy in the membership of Catholic School Council does not prevent the Catholic School Council from exercising its authority to fill the position.

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RESOLUTIONS OF CONFLICTS

If, the Principal, after discussion with the Catholic School Council Chair and/or Co-Chair(s), determines that the Catholic School Council or any of its members have contravened Regulation 612/00 or Board Policy 800.1, the Principal or Chair and/or Co-Chair(s) will discuss the matter with the Family of Schools' Superintendent of Education. Please see the Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.

Viewing disagreements as a strength and an opportunity for a meaningful problem solving dialogue requires a well established conflict resolution process as outlined.

1. Acknowledge that there is a problem.
2. Commit to finding a solution.
3. Suggest a strategy for resolving the conflict.
4. Listen to each person's views. Make no judgments.
5. Attack the problem, not the person. Give "weight" or importance to the person. Avoid labeling the person.
6. Communicate how you feel and your views.
7. Allow the others involved to state their needs and concerns. Use active listening strategies.
8. Share your needs and concerns.
9. Invite others to suggest ways to resolve the conflict.
10. Agree on a solution. Follow up to ensure the solution happens.

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL COUNCILS

Though participation in a school council requires hours of volunteer time, the rewards are many and significant. The personal and professional satisfaction that results from contributing to an effective school council involves the following:

- Focus on student learning and the best interests of all students
- Promote meaningful parental and community involvement
- Are inclusive and include members with the diverse views of their school communities: strength through differences!
- Actively involved in setting school priorities for improving student achievement
- Utilize clear and consistent processes for decision making
- Communicate regularly with the community
- Foster mutual respect, trust and understanding
- Understand clearly the roles and responsibilities of council and school administrators
- Share a common vision for student success
- Keep well informed about school and board policies & procedures
- Maintain high ethical standards

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CODE OF ETHICS

A member shall consider the best interests of all students.

A member shall be guided by the St. Denis Catholic School and the Niagara Catholic District School Board mission statements.

A member shall act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a School Council, as identified by the school's operating guidelines, the school board, and the Ontario Ministry of Education.

A member shall become familiar with the school's policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.

A member shall maintain the highest standards of integrity.

A member shall recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.

A member shall treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.

A member shall encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.

A member shall acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the council.

A member shall respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school council.

A member shall not disclose confidential information.

A member shall limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.

A member shall use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.

A member shall promote high standards of ethical practice within the St. Denis Catholic School Community.

A member shall declare any conflict of interest.

A member shall not accept any payment or benefit financially through school council involvement.

