



We are a Christ-centered Catholic faith community that celebrates diversity and fosters spiritual growth, inspiring all to reach their full potential in mind, body and spirit

Niagara Catholic District School Board



St. John Catholic Elementary School Catholic School Council By-Laws

Revised: September, 2023



Catholic School Council

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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, Vision and Values 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.

A Catholic School Council will be established in each elementary and secondary school in the Board to encourage the active participation of its members to improve student achievement and well-being of all students in their school community, and to enhance the accountability of the education system.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

St. John
Catholic School Council

BY-LAWS

The **St. John** Catholic School Council will develop By-Laws within the first sixty (60) days of the school year governing the conduct of the Catholic School Council's affairs:

- specifying the number of parent/guardian members to be appointed or elected to the committee, governing the process of appointment or election of parent/guardian members and governing the filling of vacancies in parent/guardian membership,
- specifying the number of community representatives, up to three, to be appointed to the committee, governing the process of appointment of community representatives and governing the filling of vacancies in community representative membership,
- governing the election of members of the committee to the offices of Chair/Co-Chair(s), and any offices provided for in the By-Laws, and governing the filling of vacancies in the offices of the committee,
- establishing rules respecting conflicts of interest of the members of the Catholic School Council, and
- establishing a process for conflict resolution for internal Catholic School Council disputes, consistent with the Board Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the **St. John** Catholic School Council, through active participation of its members, is to serve as an advisory to the Principal in an effort to:

- to build strong Catholic identity and community to nurture the distinctiveness of Catholic Education,
- advance student achievement and well-being for all students in their school community, and
- to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians.

The **St. John** Catholic School Council will achieve its purpose by making recommendations in accordance with the Regulation to the Principal of the school and the Board.

- Recommendations made to the Principal of the school and/or the Board on any matters that the Catholic School Council identifies as priorities will represent the general views of the school community and the best interests of all students in the school. Recommendations shall be in keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values of Niagara Catholic District School Board along with the distinctive character, philosophy and goals of Catholic Education and respectful of the faith and traditions of the Catholic Church. The Board will retain all the powers and duties specified in the Education Act and its related Regulations.

MANDATE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL COUNCIL

The **St. John** Catholic School Council through the active participation of its members is:

- to advocate and strengthen Catholic Education
- to improve student achievement and well-being of students
- to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents/guardians
- to support the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board and the Governance Policies and Administrative Operational Procedures.

COMPOSITION

The Parents/Guardians of students who are enrolled at St. John and are in attendance at the first meeting of the year shall form the majority of the St. John Catholic School Council to a maximum of thirty (30) members.

The membership shall be comprised of:

- Legal custodial parents/guardians of student(s) enrolled in the school.
- A person is not qualified to be a parent 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.
- The Principal and/or Vice-Principal of the school (non-voting member).
- Teaching staff representative(s) employed at the school.
- Non-teaching staff representative(s) employed at the school.
- A parish priest or representative from the local parish.
- One elementary student representative enrolled in the school (if applicable).
- One parent/guardian representative of a special needs child within the school (if applicable).
- Community representation (i.e. Public Health Nurse).

PARENT/GUARDIAN MEMBERSHIP

A communication will be sent out to all families in September, inviting them to join the Catholic School Council. Interested parties are to complete the form and submit the completed form by the date and time indicated in the communication. All forms will be date stamped for receipt. Incomplete forms will not be accepted.

Eligibility

1. To be eligible for election/appointment to the **St. John** Catholic School Council a person must:
 - be a parent/guardian of a student enrolled in **St. John**,
 - reside within the Board's jurisdiction,
 - be in attendance at the first Catholic School Council meeting, and
 - support the Mission of Catholic Education, and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
2. A parent/guardian who is employed by the Board is qualified to be elected/appointed to the **St. John** Catholic School Council and shall at the first meeting inform the Catholic School Council of their employment with the Board.
3. A person is not qualified to be a parent/guardian member of a Catholic School Council if he or she is employed at the school.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Eligibility

1. A person is not qualified to be on the **St. John** Catholic School Council as a community representative unless the person is qualified to vote for members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board and is a resident in the Board's jurisdiction.
2. A person who is employed by the Board cannot be on the **St. John** Catholic School Council as a community representative unless:
 - he or she is not employed at the school; and
 - the other members of the Catholic School Council are informed of the person's employment with the Board before the appointment.
3. A person on the **St. John** Catholic School Council as a community representative will be required to:
 - act in the best interest of Catholic Education;
 - support the Mission of Catholic Education, and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board;

- carry out responsibilities in a manner that assists the school in fulfilling its duties under the Education Act, the Regulations and the guidelines issued under the Act, and the Catholic School Council Policy No. 800.1 and **St. John** Catholic School Council By-Laws;
- attend and participate in meetings of the **St. John** Catholic School Council, including sub-committee meetings of which they are members; and promote student achievement and well-being of all students in the school.

ELECTIONS

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 **St. John** Catholic School Council in consultation with the Principal of the school.

Elections will be organized by the Principal:

- Review and finalize nominations, confirm names on ballots, run the election, and communicate the results.
- Nominees must be in attendance and will be invited to make a brief two (2) minute presentation to parents/guardians.
- The election of parent/guardian members shall be by secret ballot.
- Names and addresses, and contact information of the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council shall be forwarded to the Director of Education/Designate within thirty (30) calendar days of the election.
- Names of Catholic School Council members will be published to the school community by the Principal no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the election.

TERMS OF OFFICE

A person elected/appointed as a member of a Catholic School Council holds office from the date the person is elected/appointed until the date of the first meeting of the Catholic School Council after the elections held in the next school year (renewable).

OFFICERS

The **St. John** Catholic School Council shall elect Chair/Co-Chair(s) from the parent/guardian members to chair the Catholic School Council.

- **An employee of the Board cannot serve as the Chair/Co-Chair of the Catholic School Council.**

Election of Chair/Co-Chair(s)

The election of the Chair/Co-Chair shall be by nomination and vote by secret ballot. The candidates receiving a clear majority of votes cast by all parent/guardian members present shall be elected, but the count shall not be declared. Should no candidate receive a clear majority of votes cast, the candidate receiving the least number of votes shall be dropped and balloting shall be continued in this manner until a majority of ballots cast shall be in favour of one person or an equality of vote result in a tie, in which one further ballot shall be held. If an equality of votes shall result again, the candidates shall draw lots (straws) to fill the position. The drawing of lots shall be done in alphabetical order and the person who draws the longest straw shall be elected.

Sub-Committees

As deemed necessary, the **St. John** Catholic School Council may establish sub-committees to carry out specific tasks or projects in accordance with the overall mandate of the Catholic School Council and to make recommendations on these matters to the Catholic School Council.

A subcommittee of the **St. John** Catholic School Council:

- must include the Principal and/or his or her designate.
- must have at least one parent/guardian member of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- may include persons who are not members of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- members of the sub-committees will elect a Chair/Co-Chair(s) by consensus at the first meeting of the sub-committee.

The Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the subcommittee shall:

- in consultation with the school Principal and all sub-committee members determine the date and time of the **St. John** Catholic School Council sub-committee meetings.
- plan the agenda in consultation with the school Principal.
- Chair the sub-committee meetings.
- Report on the recommendations of the sub-committee at the subsequent **St. John** Catholic School Council meeting on matters of the committee.
- Record and make available the minutes of the sub-committee meetings to the school Principal and Catholic School Council members.
- communicate matters of the sub-committee with the school Principal and the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.

VACANCIES

It is the expectation of St. John Catholic School Council is for members to attend meetings regularly. The Chairperson and Principal shall address incidents of member's irregular attendance to determine the member's intent or ability to continue serving on the Catholic School Council.

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

If a vacancy of a parent member occurs, and only if this vacancy changes the simple majority of parents, notification will be given to all families and interested parents will be asked to submit their names to the Principal.

Filling a vacancy in the Office of Chair/Co-Chair(s)

Where a vacancy occurs in the office of Chair/Co-Chair(s) the Catholic School Council shall elect a parent/guardian member to complete the remainder of the term that has been vacated.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The role of the **St. John** Catholic School Council member carries with it certain responsibilities.

Members

All members of the **St. John** Catholic School Council must:

- fully participate in the annual Commissioning of the Catholic School Council Members,
- attend all **St. John** Catholic School Council meetings on a regular basis,
- participate in information and training sessions,
- work with the Catholic School Council to facilitate the approved mandate,
- solicit views of other parents/guardians and members of the community to share with the Chair/Co-Chair and Principal to be considered for agenda,
- respond to requests from the Board,
- observe the Catholic School Council's Code of Ethics and By-Laws,
- maintain a school-wide focus on all issues.

Chair/Co-Chair(s)

The Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council shall:

- determine the dates of **St. John** Catholic School Council meetings in consultation with the school Principal.
- plan the agenda with school Principal.
- chair the **St. John** Catholic School Council meetings.
- communicate regularly with the school Principal regarding matters of the Catholic School Council.
- be diligent in ensuring that any views presented in the capacity of Chair/Co-Chair(s) represent fairly the position of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- review the By-Laws annually in consultation with **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- participate as ex-officio members of all subcommittees established by the Catholic School Council.

School Principal

The School Principal shall:

- facilitate and assist in the operation of the **St. John** Catholic School Council;
- in consultation with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) determine the date and time of the **St. John** Catholic School Council and subcommittee meetings and arrange a meeting room;
- plan the agenda with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) and subcommittee Chairs/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- make every effort to have the agenda distributed to all members of the **St. John** Catholic School Council at least five (5) calendar days prior to the meeting.
- support and promote the approved activities of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- seek input from the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- act as a resource on regulations and Board policies.
- communicate with the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council on matters of the Catholic School Council as required.
- assist the **St. John** Catholic School Council in encouraging increased parent/guardian involvement.
- ensure that the approved minutes of the meetings are recorded, maintained, and posted on the Board website.
- facilitate communication between the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee and the Catholic School Councils.
- act as the secretary/treasurer to the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- prepare and present a report at each meeting, including a financial statement.
- chair the **St. John** Catholic School Council meeting the event that the Chair/Co-Chair(s) is unable to attend a meeting of the Catholic School Council.

School Staff, Community, and Parish Representatives

School Staff, Community, and Parish Representatives (voting members) shall:

- Contribute to the discussions of the Catholic School Council.
- Solicit views and report where applicable at each Catholic School Council meeting.

MEETINGS

The **St. John** Catholic School Council shall meet four (4) times in each school year between September and June. All meetings will be held at the school and are open to the public.

1. The Principal shall give written notice of the dates, times and location of the meetings of the Catholic School Council.
2. Meetings will open with the Land Acknowledgement and prayer and will also close with a prayer.
3. Meetings will commence on time and not last more than two hours, unless the majority of the Catholic School Council members agree by motion to a longer meeting of no more than fifteen minutes beyond the two-hour time limit.

4. Catholic School Council meetings shall not proceed unless there is a quorum in attendance. A quorum is fifty percent plus one (50% + 1) of parent members, but at all times there must be a majority of parents at the meeting as well as the Principal and/or his or her designate.
5. Catholic School Council meetings will address items outlined in the agenda.
6. Substitutes or proxies are not permitted
7. At all times there must be a majority of parents/guardians at the meeting.
8. The **St. John** Catholic School Council shall use consensus 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.
9. When the Catholic School Council votes on a matter, each member of the Catholic School Council is entitled to one vote except for the school Principal.
10. As cited in the Board Privacy Policy (600.6), about confidentiality and privacy of staff, students and parents, a meeting of the Catholic School Council is not the forum to discuss personal matters.

MEMBER ABSENCES AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Catholic School Council members are expected to attend all council meetings and sub-committee meetings of which they are members.

- A member who is unable to attend a scheduled Catholic School Council meeting must request to be excused from a meeting by contacting the Chair/Co-Chairs and school Principal and will be marked as excused in the minutes of the meeting.
- Members, who, prior to the adjournment of a meeting, have excused themselves or depart at any time during a meeting will have the time of departure noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- Members, who have not been excused from attendance at a Catholic School Council meeting will be recorded as absent in the minutes of the meeting.
- A member of the **St. John** Catholic School Council may lose his or her position for being absent for three consecutive meetings without authorization.
- Where a Catholic School Council member submits a letter of resignation or is absent from three (3) consecutive meetings, the Catholic School Council may appoint a replacement to serve until the next election.

AGENDAS/MINUTES AND FINANCIAL PROCEDURES & RECORDS

Agendas

Every effort will be made to distribute the agenda to members of the Catholic School Council at least five (5) calendar days prior to the meeting by delivering a notice by e-mail and posting a notice on the Board website.

Delegations

Members of the Catholic School Council may approach the Chair/Co-Chair(s) of the **St. John** Catholic School Council and the school Principal with items to be considered for placement on the agenda. This request must be submitted in writing and received at least two (2) weeks before the meeting in order to be considered for the agenda. The Chair/Co-Chair(s), in consultation with the school Principal, may approve or reject such requests. Delegations will be limited to ten (10) minutes.

Minutes and Financial Records

The approved minutes and financial transactions of the **St. John** Catholic School Council shall be retained in accordance with the policies of the Board respecting the retention of documents by committees of the Board.

1. The approved minutes of the **St. John** Catholic School Council shall be posted and remain on the school website for four (4) years.
2. The approved minutes and records of its financial transactions shall be available for examination at the school by any person without charge for four (4) years.

Funds Raised by the Catholic School Council

- The financial policies and procedures of the Council are defined by the Niagara Catholic District School Board, in keeping with applicable statements of policy and administrative guidelines.
- All accounting records and financial information relating to Council are maintained by the School under the direction of the Principal.
- All school generated funds are to be used for a purpose recommended by the Council and approved by the Principal (and the Board, when appropriate).
- Any funds raised by the Council and any assets purchased with those funds belong, legally, to the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- Funds raised by the Catholic School Council are to be distributed equitably among students and spent within the school year in which they are raised.
- The scope and involvement of the School Council in fundraising for the school shall be limited in concert with Niagara Catholic policy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest for a **St. John** Catholic School Council member involves situations in which the member's private interests may be incompatible or in conflict with the Catholic School Council.

- Each Catholic School Council member shall avoid situations that could result in an inconsistency between the overall goals and vision of the **St. John** Catholic School Council and a personal or vested interest that may arise in connection with his or her duties as a Catholic School Council member.

- Should an issue or agenda item arise during a council meeting where a council member is in a conflict of interest situation, he or she shall declare the conflict of interest immediately and decline from the discussion and resolution.
- The Catholic School Council member shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or their business affiliations could directly or indirectly benefit from the decisions of the committee.
- A Catholic School Council member who identifies a conflict of interest must declare it before any discussion of the matter begins.
- The Catholic School Council member must:
 - publicly state the conflict of interest, explain the general nature of the interest and have the declaration recorded in the minutes.
 - not vote on the matter under discussion.
 - leave the room when the committee is discussing the matter and have this fact recorded in the minutes.
 - not discuss the matter with members or attempt to influence the decision.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

If the school Principal, after discussion with the **St. John** Catholic School Council Chair/Co-Chair(s), determines that any of the Catholic School Council members have contravened Regulations 330/10 or Board Policy 800.1, the school Principal or Chair/Co-Chair(s) will discuss the matter with the Director of Education. Please see the Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.

- If a Catholic School Council member becomes disruptive during a meeting, the Chair/Co-Chair(s) shall ask for order.
- If all efforts to restore order fail or the unbecoming behaviour continues, the Chair/Co-Chair(s) may direct the individual member to leave the meeting, citing reasons for the request.
- The removal of a Catholic School Council member for one (1) meeting does not prevent the member from participating in future meetings of the Catholic School Council.
- The incident shall be recorded and submitted to the Director of Education by the Director's designate/Superintendent of Education within one (1) week of the meeting.
- It is recommended that parties involved in the conflict follow the Board's Complaint Resolution Policy No. 800.3.
- Upon removal of a Catholic School Council member, a special meeting shall be called, the purpose of which will be to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting shall be a private meeting and not construed as a meeting of the **St. John** Catholic School Council.
- Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A Catholic School Council member shall:

- support, encourage and enhance parent engagement at the school level in order to build strong Catholic identity and community to nurture the distinctiveness of Catholic Education, and to advance student achievement and well-being for all students in the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- consider the best interest of all students and the Catholic School Council members.
- be guided by the Mission of Catholic Education and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Board.
- become familiar with the Education Act, Board Policies, and Ministry of Education Regulations.
- maintain the highest standards of integrity, recognizing and respecting the personal integrity of each member of the Catholic School Council and Board staff.
- treat all other Catholic School Council members and Board Staff with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared, without interruption.
- create a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
- acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the **St. John** Catholic School Council for recommendation to the school Principal.
- focus discussions at Catholic School Council meetings to those items that fall within the mandate of the Catholic School Council.
- bring questions or concerns to the attention of the school Principal through appropriate policies of the Board.
- promote high standards of ethical practice within the Catholic School Council.
- not accept any payment for their involvement on the Catholic School Council.
- refrain from making any negative statements about any individual or groups.
- declare any conflict of interest.