

Constitution for

The Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils

Preamble

Whereas the parents^[1] of children attending Ottawa-Carleton public schools have long recognized the importance of parental involvement in education; whereas the school councils^[2] of both the Carleton and Ottawa Boards of Education have established board-wide organizations to represent their collective interests; and whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, encompassing both the Ottawa and Carleton Boards will be created, effective January 1, 1998.

The school councils, represented at the Inaugural Meeting of the Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, this 20th day of November 1997, , hereby establish the Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils and approve the constitution set out below.

Article I: Name

An organization is hereby established called the Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, hereinafter called the Assembly.

Article II: Purpose and Activities

1. The purpose of the Assembly is to seek an education of the highest quality for each child according to his or her needs

To achieve its stated purpose, the Assembly shall engage in the following activities:

- (a) assist in the development of strong school councils and encourage their participation in the Assembly;
- (b) discuss issues of general concern to school councils and make appropriate recommendations to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, hereinafter called the Board;
- (c) monitor the decisions and practices of the Board and other levels of government, in terms of their effect on education;
- (d) increase the knowledge about, and the participation of parents in, the education of their own children, both at home and at school; and of parents and the community in the promotion of education more broadly;
- (e) represent and communicate the views and concerns of school councils to the Board, the Ministry of Education and elsewhere as considered appropriate by the Assembly;
- (f) ensure representative parental input to Board activities, both policy and operational;
- (g) respond to requests from the Board and the Ministry of Education for advice and participation;
- (h) facilitate the efforts of individual parents or parent groups to effectively represent their concerns to the B oard;
- (i) liaise with other organizations having a similar purpose or interest in education; and
- (j) Undertake other activities considered relevant to the stated purpose of the Assembly.

2. The Assembly may also receive, hold and disburse money and other assets subscribed to it or acquired by it. The funds or assets of the Assembly shall not be used for any purpose other than that stated herein.

Article III: Affiliation

1. The Assembly may affiliate with other organizations that have similar or complementary purposes.
2. Affiliation with another organization, and any changes to the terms of an affiliation agreement, shall require a two-thirds majority of votes cast at a general meeting, for which proper notice of motion has been given.

Article IV: Membership and Delegates

1. Membership in the Assembly is open to all school councils. See Article IX.1 for voting rights and Article XI.4 for definition of membership in good standing.
2. Each school council is encouraged to elect one delegate, wherever possible a parent, to act on its behalf at Assembly meetings. Chairs^[3] of school councils may also attend and participate in meetings of the Assembly. The chair or an alternate delegate elected by the school council may perform the duties of the delegate in his or her absence. A school council chair or delegate who is elected as Chair of the Assembly may ask the school council to elect a second delegate to assume the duties of school council delegate.
3. The duties of delegates are described in Annex A.
4. Trustees and those holding management positions with the Board are not eligible to serve as delegates to the Assembly.

Article V: Officers

1. The Assembly shall elect the following officers from among the delegates or school council chairs: Chair and Vice-Chair (or alternatively Co-Chairs at the discretion of the candidates for office), Recording Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Communications Officer and a number of Liaison Officers as deemed necessary to ensure effective communications with OCASC members, said number to be confirmed at the AGM each year. The duties of officers are described in Annex A.
2. The term of office shall be one year commencing on the date of the AGM, immediately following the elections, and terminating on the date of the next AGM, immediately following the elections. Appointments made to fill vacant positions after the AGM (see article VIII.2) will also terminate on the date of the next AGM, immediately following the elections. The Chair/Co-Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer are eligible to serve for three consecutive terms in the same position. There are no limits on the number of consecutive terms of the other officers. An officer may serve out his or her term if he or she ceases to be the delegate or chair of the school council, if the reasons for this are that his or her children change schools or if the terms of the school council positions are different from those of the Assembly.
3. At any meeting, the Assembly may elect, from among the delegates or school council chairs, officers to other positions that may be required, for periods of up to a year and the names, titles and duties shall be recorded in the minutes.

4. Officers may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the delegates in attendance at a meeting. Reasonable advance notice of such a motion to remove must be given to all school council delegates and chairs.
5. The immediate Past-Chair of the Assembly may serve as an officer.
6. Notwithstanding any other article, any Executive Committee member may be removed by a 2/3 majority of votes cast at any regularly scheduled^[4] Executive Committee meeting if any one of the following two situations apply: i)the member has missed three consecutive regularly scheduled Executive meetings within the Assembly year,ii)the member has missed three consecutive Assembly meetings within the Assembly year. Reinstatements may occur as per regular vacancy filling under Article VIII.2 but this does not clear the attendance record.
[4]

Article VI: Executive Committee

1. The Executive Committee shall be composed of all elected officers, the chair of the Secondary Standing Committee and the immediate Past-Chair as per Article V.6 above.
2. Meetings of the Executive Committee are to be called by the Chair, or at the request of at least three members of the Executive. The Chair shall prepare the agenda for meetings of the Executive Committee.
3. The Executive Committee shall guide the Assembly by identifying issues requiring action/input, drafting policies and proposing courses of action to further the stated purpose of the Assembly. The Executive Committee shall attend to the business of the Assembly between general meetings.4. The quorum of the Executive Committee shall be fifty per cent of members.

Article VII: General Meetings

1. The Chair, or any three members of the Executive Committee, may call a general meeting at any time by giving reasonable notice of the time and place of the meeting, and by sending an agenda to the delegates and chairs of all school councils at least five days prior to the scheduled date of the meeting. At least five general meetings will be held from September to June.
2. An Annual General Meeting shall be held in May each year for the purpose of electing officers, presenting officers' reports, receiving the independently reviewed financial statement and the budget, and other necessary business.
3. A special general meeting may be called by the Executive Committee to deal with an urgent issue. At least one week's notice of place, time and agenda must be given.
4. The Recording Secretary shall call a special general meeting within fourteen days of receiving a written petition signed by the delegates or chairs of at least 15 school councils and shall state the purpose of the meeting.
5. A quorum for all general meetings shall be delegates or school council chairs representing one-third of school council members in good standing, including at least half the members of the Executive Committee.
6. General meetings are open to members of the public who wish to attend as observers. Observers may be allowed to participate at the discretion of the Chair.

Article VIII: Elections

1. The election of officers shall normally take place at the Annual General Meeting.
2. Positions not filled at the Annual General Meeting, and vacancies occurring during the year, may be filled by appointment by vote of the Executive Committee. The appointments will be submitted for ratification by the Assembly at the next general meeting.
3. At a general meeting of the Assembly held at least six weeks before the Annual General Meeting, the Assembly shall appoint a Nominating Committee composed of three delegates, including at least one member of the Executive Committee and one who is not a member of the Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee shall select a chair.
4. At least six weeks before the Annual General meeting, the Nominating Committee shall:
 - (a) inform the membership of all officer positions;
 - (b) invite nominations for candidates to fill all officer positions; and
 - (c) announce that the closing date for those nominations to be made through the nominating committee shall be no less than two weeks before the scheduled date of the Annual General Meeting.
5. The Nominating Committee shall strive to have the nominees represent a cross section of council interests across the Board.
6. The election shall be conducted by the chair of the Nominating Committee who shall present the nominations received by the nominating committee and invite nominations from the floor for each position.
7. The vote shall be counted by two volunteers from among the delegates present who are not candidates. The successful candidates shall be announced at the Annual General Meeting by the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

Article IX: Voting

1. Each school council in good standing (see Article XI.4 below) shall have one vote at general meetings and in all elections and other ballots. The vote shall normally be cast by the delegate of the school council. In the absence of the delegate, the chair or another delegate of the school council may vote.
2. Each officer shall have one vote at Executive Committee meetings
3. The Chair of the Assembly may cast a vote at a general meeting or at a meeting of the Executive Committee only in order to decide a tied vote.
4. The chair of a committee shall vote at the same time as the other members of the committee. In the event of a tied vote in committee, the motion is defeated.
5. Approval of all motions shall require a majority of votes cast, unless otherwise stated in this constitution.
6. Elections of officers and committee members shall be by a majority vote when there are two candidates and by a plurality vote when there are more than two candidates.
7. The Membership Secretary is responsible for counting votes at all general meetings and communicating the results to the Chair.

Article X: Official Observers and Committees

1. The Assembly shall assign delegates or school council chairs to attend meetings of the Board and its committees and to report on these meetings to the Executive and to the Assembly.

2. Delegates/chairs of secondary school councils shall constitute a standing committee of the Assembly and the terms of reference shall be proposed by the standing committee and approved at a general meeting.3. Terms of reference for any additional standing committees shall be prepared by the Executive Committee and put before the membership for approval at a general meeting. Terms of reference may be amended at any subsequent general meeting, provided that notice of the motion to amend is included in the agenda issued for the meeting.4. Ad hoc committees may be established by vote at a general meeting or at a meeting of the Executive Committee. Motions to establish ad hoc committees shall contain appropriate initial terms of reference. Any modifications to the terms of reference must be approved at a subsequent general meeting or by the Executive Committee.5. The Assembly or the Executive may appoint any person to perform a task on its behalf. The terms of reference of the task and the person appointed to perform it shall be approved by vote at a general meeting.
6. The membership of all committees and Assembly membership on all Board committees shall be ratified by the membership at a general meeting.
7. A quorum for all committee meetings shall be delegates or chairs representing a majority of school council members in good standing.

Article XI: Fees

1. The Assembly may establish membership fees at the Annual General Meeting taking into account the recommendation of the Treasurer. If established, fees shall be due by the end of October. 2. In a year where fees are established, the Executive may, at its discretion, waive the fees of a school council, if the council passes a resolution requesting a waiver and explaining the rationale.3. Any change in membership fees recommended in the annual report of the Treasurer shall be voted upon as a separate motion at the Annual General Meeting.
4. In a year where fees are established, a school council that has paid its membership fees or whose fees have been waived by the Executive is a member in good standing. In a year where fees have not been established, any school council is a member in good standing if the chair of the council notifies the Chair of the Assembly of the council's intention to be a member and of the name of its delegate.

Article XII: Finances

1. The financial year of the Assembly shall be from September 1 until August 31.
2. All expenditures for items costing in excess of \$100.00 that are not included in the budget for the current fiscal year require approval by the Assembly by a motion at a general meeting.
3. Cheques to disburse funds of the Assembly shall be signed by any two of the Treasurer, the Chair and another member of the Executive Committee designated by a motion at a general meeting.
4. The financial records of the Assembly shall be reviewed annually by two delegates to the Assembly, excluding the Treasurer, or by an independent reviewer who is not a delegate to the Assembly who is appointed for such a purpose at a general meeting of the Assembly prior to its Annual General Meeting. The report of the reviewer(s) shall be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

5. No officer of, or delegate to, the Assembly shall be paid for duties performed on behalf of the Assembly, but the reasonable expenses of an officer or delegate, incurred while performing their duties, may be reimbursed.

Article XIII: Rules of Order

The Modern Edition of Robert's Rules of Order", Revised by Darwin Patnode, Ph.D. published by Berkley Books, N.Y. ISBN 0-425-13928-X shall govern all procedural matters not contained in this constitution.

Article XIV: Amendments

1. At least 28 days' notice shall be given for any motion to amend the constitution.
2. The constitution may be amended, at any general meeting, on approval of a motion of amendment by a simple majority of member school councils in good standing.
3. If a member school council is unable to send a delegate to a general meeting at which an amendment to the constitution is to be determined, that member's vote with respect to the motion of amendment to the constitution may be cast by sealed written ballot to be received by the Recording Secretary prior to the meeting, or by another person holding the absent delegate's written proxy to be registered with the Recording Secretary at the commencement of the meeting.

As approved by the Assembly at its Inaugural Meeting held on November 20, 1997; and amended at the Annual Meeting held on October 15, 1998

original signed by Joan Spice, Chair (1998-1999)

original signed by Derrick Oswald, Vice-Chair (1998-1999)

Annex A

Duties of Delegates and Officers

Delegates

The duties of the delegate of a member in good standing are to attend and participate in Assembly meetings and other activities, to report to and consult with the member school council and to cast the vote of the member school council at Assembly meetings. These duties may be filled by the chair or by another delegate of the school council in the absence of the delegate.

The Chair of the Assembly

The Chair administers the affairs of the Assembly and ensures that all policies and actions approved by the membership are implemented. The Chair presides at meetings of the Assembly

and prepares the agenda for such meetings with advice from the other Executive officers and committees. The Chair also represents the views of the Assembly to the Board, the Ministry of Education and Training, the media and elsewhere, as required.

The Vice-Chair (in the case of a single Chair)

Where there is a single Chair, the Vice-Chair fulfills the duties of the Chair when that person is temporarily absent or otherwise unable to perform the duties of the office. The Vice-Chair also performs specific duties assigned by the Chair, or requested by the Executive Committee or the general membership.

Liaison Officers

Liaison Officers act as a point of contact for a certain number of school councils and represent collectively a cross-section of school council interests across the Board. Liaison Officers attend and participate in Executive and Assembly meetings and may choose areas of specialization with the agreement of the Executive. See Index I for additional reference information on the Role and Responsibility of OCAS Liaison Officers.

The Recording Secretary

The Recording Secretary is responsible for the general correspondence of the Assembly and for liaison, including correspondence, with both existing and potential members. The Secretary issues notices and agendas on behalf of the Chair or the Executive Committee, and prepares and distributes minutes of all general meetings and of the Executive Committee.

The Membership Secretary

The Membership Secretary is responsible for maintaining a current list of member school councils including the names and contact information for school council delegates and chairs. The Membership Secretary, in cooperation with the Liaison Officers, encourages regular attendance at general meetings. The Membership Secretary registers the attendance of delegates and school council chairs at general meetings, determines quorum and counts the votes.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the care and custody of the funds and other financial assets of the Assembly and for making payments for all approved expenses incurred by the Assembly. The Treasurer maintains books of the accounts that shall be made available for inspection by members at any reasonable time on request. At each Annual General Meeting, the Treasurer presents an account of the finances of the Assembly, together with an independent financial review and a budget for the following fiscal year including any recommendations for change to the annual dues of member councils. The Treasurer also maintains a record of dues paid by member school councils.

The Communications Officer

The Communications Officer prepares communications on behalf of the Assembly, to the media and elsewhere as directed by the Executive. The Communications Officer keeps records of Assembly contacts with the media and the resulting publication of statements on behalf of the Assembly. The Communications Officer may undertake additional tasks such as monitoring the

media coverage of education generally at the suggestion of the Executive or on his or her own initiative.

The Chair of the Secondary School Standing Committee

The chair of the Secondary School Standing Committee presides at meetings of the delegates/chairs representing secondary school councils and prepares the agenda for such meetings. The chair of the Secondary School Standing Committee reports on the business and recommendations of the Committee to the general membership and the Executive and advises the Executive Committee on issues of concern to secondary schools.

[¹] All references to “parents” in this document include “parents and guardians”.

[²] All references to school councils in this document mean school councils within the jurisdiction of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

[³] All references to chairs in this document include co-chairs.

[⁴] All references to “regularly scheduled” meeting of a Committee or of the Assembly mean to include any such meeting held from September to June which has been advertised to its members in a customary best efforts manner, not less than two weeks ahead of time, and which has not been called under any emergency or special provision of the constitution. If there is more than one such meeting within a calendar month then only the first of these shall be considered to have been a regularly scheduled meeting.

Annex B

These guidelines are meant to apply to all Exec affiliates, internal OCASC Committee Chairs as well as to Council delegates as appropriate.

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER CODE OF ETHICS

Adopted by the AGM May 2004

OBJECTIVE

Whereas the EIC recommended that the Ministry establish a code of conduct for school council members that would, at minimum, cover the following areas:

- * a focus on student learning and what is otherwise best for students in the school
- * the need to keep in mind the values and priorities of the entire community
- * privacy of information provisions
- * safeguards against control by special interests

Therefore, the purpose of this document is:

To establish a code of ethics for Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Council executive members in discharging their duties as the officers of the Assembly entrusted with the duty to act at all times with the utmost good faith in the best interests of the organization.

2.0 DEFINITION

2.1 The term duty means responsibility for fulfilling all requirements as identified under the job description of a person's position, both individually and collectively.

3.0 POLICY

3.1 Executive members shall strive to govern themselves in accordance with the highest public morality, in accordance with governmental laws, and shall base their actions on unimpeachable conduct, acting at all times with utmost good faith in accordance with their duty.

3.2 Executive members shall strive to adhere to the highest ethical standards in their dealings with the school community, the Board, staff, media and the public.

3.3 Executive members shall maintain the confidentiality of privileged information and/or private discourse.

Such information includes but is not limited to:

- a) correspondence sent to an institution or to an individual person by an individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature, and replies to that correspondence which would reveal the contents of the original correspondence;
- b) intimate, personal or financial information about an identifiable individual;
- c) various privileged information concerning the Board or its operations that is implicitly or explicitly of a confidential nature which may include but is not limited to the security of the property of the Board, negotiations with employees of the Board, and litigation affecting the Board.

3.4 Executive members shall refrain from making any allegations of a personal nature in the course of debating an issue. Members agree to discuss the facts of an issue and not the character of persons involved in the issues.

3.5 Executive members can be held responsible with regard to liability for illegal or negligent actions, or for statements that may be considered libel or slander made in the course of a meeting or published (including publication by electronic means).

3.6 Executive members shall not abuse the position or authority entrusted to them by the Assembly members. Executive members shall work together democratically to make decisions on behalf of the Assembly in accordance with its guiding principles, while reflecting the values and responding to the needs of the school community and the Assembly he or she serves.

3.7 Executive members shall render all decisions based on available facts and their independent judgment, and shall refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups.

3.8 Each member is free to express individual opinions on issues under consideration by the Assembly based on his or her personal beliefs, having taken into consideration the best interests of the organization as a whole, its students, and the local school council he or she represents. When expressing individual views, Executive members shall respect the differing points of view of colleagues, staff, students and the public.

3.9 Once the Executive Committee or Assembly reaches a decision, each member shall respect the decision and support the vote of the majority. Members who may not agree with the decision may voice an opinion on behalf of his or her school council. When doing so, members shall voice a position only in the context of the issue and will refrain from directing criticism at any individual or group.

3.10 If a disagreement arises between one or more members of the executive, the preferred method of resolution is private consensus on the matter. If the disagreement cannot be resolved privately, the members may ask the Chair to mediate. In such a case, the Chair will work toward a consensus, but if that is not possible the decision of the majority will stand, the Chair acting as mediator. If any member involved in the disagreement is not satisfied with the decision, the members may choose to bring the issue to the entire executive committee. A final decision will be reached either by consensus or democratic process and, if agreed, the parties concerned will respect the resulting decision.

3.11 If an Executive member has been found to act in a manner that contravenes this Code of Ethics, the Chair will approach the member and ask them to rectify the situation. If the member who has broken the Code of Ethics will not rectify the situation on the urging of the Chair, the Chair will bring the case before the entire executive committee. If the executive committee agrees that the member has indeed acted inappropriately the executive may choose to call for the resignation of the member in accordance with the procedure outlined in the current Constitution.