

Spring Valley Elementary School Council Constitution

September 2019

1. Name:

The name of this organization is the Spring Valley Elementary School Council (the “Council”).

2. Purpose:

To enrich the educational opportunities and the learning environment of the students at Spring Valley Elementary.

3. Objectives:

- To contribute to the development of the school improvement plan and school safety plan.
- To act in an advisory capacity to the principal and the school board.
- To promote relationships based on mutual care and mutual responsibility among parents, staff and the community.
- To inform parents and the community about programs and services available.
- To encourage and assist parent engagement in children's learning.
- To support an active volunteer program.
- To build working relationships with other organizations which concern themselves with the care and teaching of children in home, school and community.
- To raise funds as needed in order to fulfill the purpose and objectives of the school council.

4. Membership:

The School Council shall consist of no less than 14 members as follows:

- at least 10 but no more than 16 parents (this includes the executive members as per Section 5), elected by the parents/guardians of children attending Spring Valley Elementary
- the principal
- 1 teacher, chosen by the teachers
- 1 non-teaching staff member
- 1 community member, chosen by the members of the School Council.

5. Elections

Executive Members

In June, a notice will go out to all parents and guardians of existing students announcing elections for any executive positions that are either coming to the end of term in September or positions that are otherwise vacant. Nominations are due to the executive and will be closed two weeks prior to election day. Parents are asked to self nominate, and submit their names to the Chair by a pre-determined date, two weeks prior to the September Council meeting. Filling positions will occur in three ways depending on how many candidates are running for each position:

1. If there is more than one candidate for a position:

A vote will be held by secret ballot at the September Council meeting. Results will be tabulated by the principal and Chair or a teacher representative, and announced during the September meeting.

2. If there is one candidate for a position:

A motion will be put forward at the September meeting to accept the candidate for the position.

3. If there are no candidates for a position:

A request for a volunteer for the position will occur at the meeting. If a parent/guardian volunteers, a motion will be put forward to accept the volunteer for this position. If more than one parent volunteers for a position, a secret ballot vote will take place.

Non-Executive Parent Members (Voting Members)

During the first Council meeting in September (which must take place within the first 30 days of the school year), all parents/guardians will be invited to volunteer to serve on the School Council to make up the remaining non-executive positions, to a maximum of 16 voting members, including the executive. If more than the required number of parents volunteer (ie. more than 12) then a random lottery system will be used to select names. Interested parents/guardians will write their names down and submit to the Principal, who will administer the lottery. Names will be recorded as they are selected, and announced to the group.

Anyone can be a member of the School Council provided he or she is a parent/guardian of a pupil who is enrolled at Spring Valley Elementary.

All parents are welcome at School Council meetings. If a vote is required only School Council Voting members can vote (executive members plus members at large, max of 16) with the exception of elections for Council members. All parents/guardians who have a child enrolled at Spring Valley Elementary will be eligible to vote in the elections for Council members.

6. Executive

The Executive of the School Council shall be elected to the Council and selected by the parents/guardians at the first meeting of the school year. HWDSB employees may not serve on the executive. It shall be comprised of the following members:

- Chair
- Vice or Co- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

7. Duties and Responsibilities

Council (Voting) Members shall:

- Act as a link between the Council and the Spring Valley Elementary Community;
- Encourage the participation of parents/guardians from all groups and of other people within the Spring Valley Elementary community;
- Participate on committees established by the School Council;
- Contribute to the discussions of the School Council;
- Observe the council's code of ethics (attached) and established bylaws;
- Be willing to attend the majority of the meetings for a term of one (1) year.

Chair/Co-Chairs Shall:

- Fulfill the roles of the Council members outlined in section 6;
- Be elected to the Council as per the voting procedures outlined in the Council bylaws
- Chair meetings
- Call Council and Executive meetings
- Attend subcommittee meetings whenever possible
- Prepare the meeting agendas in consultation with principal one (1) week prior to a Meeting
- Ensure minutes are recorded and maintained
- Participate in information and training programs
- Help to define new policies or by-law updates as required
- Consult with school principal on matters pertinent to School Council
- Ensure that topics considered are relevant and dealt with appropriately
- Ensures that Council stays on task

- Ensure that there is regular communication with the school community
- Consult with senior Board of Education Staff and Trustees as required.

Vice Chair shall:

- Fulfill the roles of the Council Members outlined in section 6;
- Be elected to the Council as per the voting procedures outlined in the Council bylaws
- Attend executive meetings
- Help to define new policies or by-law updates as required
- Approve monthly minutes prior to distribution
- Attend subcommittee meetings whenever possible
- Be available to consult with Chair on matters pertinent to School Council
- Fulfill the responsibilities of the Chair at the request of the Chairperson
- Participate in information and training programs

Secretary shall:

- Fulfill the roles of the Council Members outlined in section 6;
- Be elected to the Council as per the voting procedures outlined in the Council bylaws
- Attend executive meetings;
- Record, distribute and maintain Council and Executive minutes in PDF format including attendance; Record attendance of voting members
- Copies of the draft minutes will be given to the Chair, Vice Chair, and the Principal within ten (10) days and then distributed to the other voting members for amendments and e-vote approval.
- Copies of the approved minutes will be given to the parent community within fifteen (15) days of the related meeting and posted on the Spring Valley Elementary website.
- An electronic copy of the minutes will be kept in the office;
- Prepare other Council documents as necessary and appropriate;
- Participate in information and training programs as appropriate;
- Be willing to commit to and participate in Council meetings.

Treasurer shall:

- Fulfill the roles of the Council Members as outlined in section 6;
- Be elected to the Council as per the voting procedures outlined in the Council bylaws;
- Attend executive meetings;
- Collect/follow-up on monies collected at the school through School Council initiatives.
- During fundraising events, the Treasurer does not have to be present for all collections and counting of monies but must verify the amount collected in addition to a school administrator before deposit;
- Update and maintain accurate records, as provided by school administrator, in binder to be made available to any parent member of the school community (Council or otherwise);
- Ensure that parents collecting monies marked for Council count and record intake prior to forwarding for recount and deposit on the standardized form provided by administration.
- Verify that Treasury figures are reported at monthly Council meetings and that said figures are accurately reflected in monthly minutes prior to distribution.

Teaching Staff Representative shall:

- Follow the roles of the Council members;
- Represent the teaching staff and present reports on behalf of the teaching staff at Council meetings.
- Participate in information and training programs as appropriate
- Be willing to commit to and participate in Council meetings

Principal shall:

- Facilitate the establishment of the School Council in accordance with Regulation 612 of the Education Act and Board policy and direction;
- Support and promote approved Council's activities;
- Seek input from the Council in areas in which it has been assigned advisory responsibility;
- Act as a resource on laws, regulations, School Board policies, and collective agreements;
- Obtain and provide information required by the Council to enable it to make informed decisions;
- Communicate with the Chair of the Council as required.

8. Term of Office

The non-executive parent members shall remain on Council for one school year term from the first meeting in September to the end of the school year in June. Members of the Executive Council shall remain in office for a period of two (2) years running from the first meeting in September, but may announce resignation at the end of one year. Executive positions will be held for no longer than a two year term unless no one steps forward to fill the position. Notice of intent to remain on the executive Council shall be given to the Chair by June 1st.

9. Council Meetings

The Council will establish its meeting schedule at the first meeting of the school year. Meetings may occur up to once a month during the school year and/or at the discretion of the Chair, but must meet a minimum of four (4) times per year as stipulated in Regulation 612 of the Education Act.

Any additional or special meeting of the Council shall be at the call of the Chair and can be requested by any Council member. All parents will be encouraged to provide as much input as possible and reasonable into the decisions of School Council. However, in the interest of time during meetings, the Chair may at times restrict the discussion to members of the School Council.

Unless otherwise announced, all council meetings will take place at the school. Meetings shall be open to all parents and the public. Parents shall be advised of the dates, times and location of all meetings.

10. Voting Privileges

All members of the Council shall have one vote with the exception of:

- Principal – cannot vote
- Teaching staff – one vote between staff members, if more than one member is present
- If a Council member has missed 50 percent or more of the September to January Council meetings or 50 percent of total meetings beyond that, as proposed to take place at the first meeting in September, then that member will lose his or her voting privileges and the position will be considered vacant.
- There can be ONLY 1 Parent Voting Member per family
- All votes will be done by a show of hands, or if requested or the need arises, by secret ballot.
- If possible, matter shall be decided by consensus. However, when there is no consensus, decisions shall be made by a simple majority (greater than 50 percent) vote of members.
- Voting will only take place at a regularly scheduled meeting unless a special meeting is called after notifying all voting members of Council of that meeting.
- A vote can only be taken if quorum is met.
- For special circumstances or time sensitive issues an email vote can occur as directed by the Chair.

11. Quorum

Quorum will be met when 51 percent of the council memberships are present at a meeting. No issue can be voted on without a quorum.

12. Vacancies

If any School Council positions become vacant because of resignation, inability of a member to fulfill his or her roles and responsibilities, or other cause, the remaining members shall constitute the school council, unless the parent/guardian majority is not maintained. If the number of parents on the Council is not maintained (minimum 10), the School Council shall send home nomination forms for the vacant position(s) for parents on the Council and to hold an election for the purpose of filling the vacancy. Vacant positions, other than for parent representatives, may be filled by appointment of the Council for the remaining term of office, from among members of the school community who meet the requirements set for the vacant positions.

13. Agenda

Any parent may add an item to the agenda provided the item is submitted in writing to the Chair at least five (5) days prior to the next Council meeting. The agenda shall be established by the Chair in consultation with the executive and the Principal. Agendas for all meetings shall be posted (3) days prior to the meeting on school website.

14. Minutes

Minutes shall be recorded by the Secretary or designate at every Council meeting. Copies of the minutes shall be presented and approved by the Council. Copies of all approved minutes must be made available to the school community, and must be posted on the school's website. All activities and decisions of the Council will be communicated to parents through the school newsletter or by special notice.

Minutes can be approved via EVOTE from voting council members in order to have them posted on the Spring Valley Elementary website prior to the next council meeting. Voting Council members should respond to EVOTE request within 48 hours in order to have minutes posted in a timely manner. See section 7 under Duties and Responsibilities; Secretary.

15. Subcommittees

The need for subcommittees will be determined by Council (i.e. Fundraising, Special Events)

- Consists of a minimum of two (2) people not from the same family;
- Council Chair and Co/Vice Chair will be invited to all subcommittee meetings;
- A School Council member must chair the committee, but the members of the subcommittee do not need to be voting members of the parent council;
- Subcommittee Chairs shall volunteer annually via sign-up with advance knowledge of each specific event (e.g. Silent Auction, School Picnic, etc.).
- Advance knowledge will be made available in the form of event guides outlining roles and responsibilities for each event; this information will be made available to all prospective volunteers (i.e. prospective Chairs and their committee members).
- These committees will meet at the discretion of the Chair of the Subcommittee;
- All subcommittees will present an update at Council meetings and will provide a report pertaining to any financial requests;
- Council must approve all recommendations brought forth by the subcommittee before they are implemented;
- Discussion and voting will take place at Council meetings; or by evote if necessary.
- All monies collected for deposit to the Council account **must** be fully counted, tracked/ reconciled and reported on a collection sheet (obtained through the school administrator) by the Chair of each subcommittee prior to submission for deposit. The school administrator must always be the last person to recount any intake;

16. Addressing Parental Concerns/Feedback

- Parents with concerns or feedback for Council shall be provided with multiple forums to do so;
- A Council “Suggestion Box” will be maintained by the Executive as a (potentially) anonymous way to provide input. Parents/ Guardians may submit concerns or feedback in a sealed envelope attention to SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIR to the school;
- A downloadable form will be made available via the school website so that concerns/feedback can be clearly expressed, along with expected follow-up from the Executive/Council;
- Executive members will also make themselves available via e-mail and personal contact for all members of the parent community;
- Parents are also encouraged to attend as many Council meetings as they can where they are welcome to express their views in an open forum;
- The Executive shall be held accountable to respond to all (legitimate) concerns;
- The process or protocol for response will be to review the concern(s) as an Executive, and confer with the Principal, if warranted;
- Responses will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, as deemed appropriate by the Executive.

17. Conflict Resolution

- Every School Council member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concern and/or opinion about the issue at dispute and how the dispute has affected him or her
- Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times;
- Speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption at the discretion of the Chair;
- The Chair’s responsibility is to clarify the statements made by the speakers, to identify common ground among the points-of-view raised and to set out the joint interests of all members;
- If no common ground can be identified, the Chair will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further;
- If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the Chair shall request the intervention of the Principal. If the conflict involves the Principal, the Council member can request the involvement of the Superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution of the conflict
- If a Council member or members become disruptive during a meeting, the Chair shall ask for order. If all efforts to restore order fail or the unbecoming behaviour continues, the Chair shall ask for the individual Council members to leave the meeting, citing the reasons for the request;

18. Conflict of Interest

- A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived or potential
- Members of Council shall declare a conflict of interest in matters that they, members of their families or business entities in which they may have an interest stand to benefit, either directly or indirectly, by decisions of the Council;
- 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 immediately declare a conflict of interest and decline from the discussion and resolution;
- A member shall not accept favours or economic benefits from any individual, organization or entity known to be seeking business contracts with the school.

CODE OF ETHICS

A member shall consider the best interests of all students.

A member shall be guided by the school's and the school board's 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 school community.

A member shall declare any conflict of interest.

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