

School Council and Society Meeting Format and Decision Making

Hillhurst School Council and Society
General Meeting

Wednesday November 13, 2013

Meeting Formats

Chairing the Meeting

- It is expected that a parent will chair school council meetings.
- An effective chair or co-chairs will have an agenda that is focused on the business of the school council.
- The chair should start the meeting on time, encourage or allow opinions on each topic, sum up each discussion item with a view to closing the item and moving on, and end the meeting on time.

Meeting Formats Cont.

How can we fulfill our role and ensure everyone has a voice?

- Ensure agenda requests are submitted prior to general meetings
- Consult with principal to ensure agreed upon agenda items can reasonably be covered in meeting timeframe
- Itemize where a motion/vote is required to ensure sufficient time for members to become informed on the issue
- Assign reasonable timeframes for each agenda item while recognizing there may be a need to exceed timeframe

Meeting Formats Cont.

- Prioritize agenda items in order of importance
- If meeting time is not sufficient to finish all agenda items either put forward a motion to add item to the following general or executive meeting or a motion to exceed meeting end time.
- New business for referral only – chair and principal will review for next general meeting
- Hold regular executive meetings to streamline meetings and make decisions outside of general meetings where possible and appropriate

Decision Making - Models

The way school councils make decisions may vary, depending on the issue. Two typical models for making decisions are consensus and majority vote.

- **Consensus**

Making a decision by consensus requires that each decision maker agree to the final outcome but not necessarily all parts of it. School council members agree the total package best meets everyone's needs and supports it on that basis.

Decision Making – Models Cont.

- **Majority Vote**

When making a decision by majority vote, it is necessary to provide ample time for school council members to become informed on the issue and to discuss it thoroughly. Majority vote is effective when it is not likely that a compromise will be reached. A drawback of this style of decision making is that it can create a win/lose situation.

- **Combination**

School councils may combine both strategies to seek consensus from the school community and then confirm the decision by a majority vote.

Decision Making – Rules of Order

- Rules of order help school councils operate effectively.
- School councils can establish rules of order, according to their culture and needs.
- Rules of order help formalize discussion, debate and decisions for the group. It is important that the school council follows a set of rules and that the chair knows the rules and adheres to them.
- There are official rules, such as Robert's Rules of Order.

Decision Making - Rules of Order Cont.

Simple Rules of Order

1. An individual must be recognized by the chair before obtaining the floor to make a motion.
2. Once an individual has the floor, he or she may make a formal proposal or motion, beginning with the statement, "I move ..."
3. Another individual must second the motion by saying, "I second the motion." This indicates that he or she agrees, in principle, and that the proposal should be discussed.
4. Once a motion is made and seconded, the chair states the motion so everyone is clear on what is being proposed. From this point until the motion has been voted on, all discussion focuses on the question.

Decision Making - Rules of Order Cont.

5. After stating the motion, the chair asks if the assembly is ready for the motion or ready to vote on the proposal.
6. If no one indicates a desire to speak to the issue, the chair puts the motion or conducts the vote by asking for those in favour and those opposed. The vote may be conducted by a show of hands, by
7. standing or by ballot.
8. If members of the group wish to discuss the motion, the chair opens debate. Each participant may speak to the motion twice. Once debate is complete, the chair puts the motion.
9. The majority needed to pass the motion should be stated in the school council operational procedures; e.g., 51%. In case of a tie, the motion is lost.

Decision Making - Going Forward

Need to update Guiding Principals and convert document into School Council Operating Procedures including:

- Goals aligned with role of School Council as defined by the ASCA
- Model of Governance and Membership
- Decision Making Model
- Code of Ethics
- Relationship with Society

Decision Making - Going Forward Cont.

Need to be flexible and understand that School Council Operating Procedures will need to be updated and will change over time depending on our needs as an organization.