

Introduction to School Council: a guide for prospective members



What is a school council?

- Is a legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school
- Is the major governing body of the school
- Plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes
- Endorses the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents



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Legal framework

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*
- Individual school council's constituting order

All school council decision-making takes place within a framework of legislated powers, Ministerial Orders, directions, guidelines and DEECD policy



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Objectives of school council

- Assist in the efficient governance of the school
- Ensure students' best interests are primary
- Enhance the educational opportunities for students
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and regulations



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What is the function of school council?

- Establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community
- Participate in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
- Develop, review and update school policies
- Develop, review and monitor the Student Engagement Policy and the School Dress Code
- Raise funds for school-related purposes
- Approve the annual budget and monitor expenditure
- Maintain the school's grounds and facilities
- Enter into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)
- Report annually to the school community and to DEECD
- Generally stimulate interest in the school in the wider community



School council does not...

- Manage the school
- Employ ongoing teaching staff with no fixed date for termination
- Represent sectional interests
- Renew the principal's contract or hire and fire the school principal
- Determine class allocations
- Discuss individual issues between teachers and students and/or parents
- Purchase land or buildings
- Enter into hire purchase agreements or obtain credit or loan facilities, unless authorised by the Minister



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Key partnerships

- Principal and school council president
- President and subcommittee convenors
- Council members
- Staff and parents and school council
- School council and DEECD



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Who is on school council?

- There are 3 categories of membership:
 - Parent members
 - DEECD employee members
 - Community (co-opted) members (optional)
- School councillors are elected for a two-year term
- Terms, rights and responsibilities of community members are the same as those of elected councillors



School council subcommittees

- School councillors would normally sit on at least one subcommittee
- Sub-committees might include:
 - Finance
 - Environment/grounds/facilities/buildings
 - Educational policy
 - Community liaison/community building/community relations
 - Other – e.g. outside school hours care, canteen



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What is the role of school council members?

- All school councillors need to respect other members' opinions AND support and uphold all council decisions
- Parent members bring expertise and views to council on behalf of the whole school community
- DEECD members bring educational expertise and views to council on behalf of the whole school community
- Community representatives tend to bring individual expertise to assist council in specific decisions



Do I have what it takes to be on school council?

- You need to be keen, but you don't need to be an expert
- You need to like people and be able to work in a team
- You do need to be prepared to commit the time needed to ensure the work of council gets done
- School councils work best when they have people from a variety of backgrounds and have different experiences



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Why would I want to be on school council?

- It's a great way to get involved and have a real say in what your school is doing for its students
- It's a very good way to help present and future students of the school
- Your children may feel a greater sense of belonging with the school



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What is the workload?

- School council must meet at least 8 times in each year, and at least once per school term
- Meetings should be restricted to approximately 2.5 hours duration at most
- In many schools, all school councillors are expected to sit on at least one subcommittee
- Subcommittee generally meet at least twice each term



What about the elections?

- The principal arranges and conducts the elections
- These are held in February or March each year
- If you decide to stand for election, you can arrange for someone to nominate you as a candidate or you can nominate yourself
- Your nomination form needs to be returned within the time stated on the Notice of Election and Call for Nominations
- Ballots are only held if more people nominate as candidates than there are positions to fill
- Make sure you vote and encourage other parents to do the same



Where can I find out more?

- The principal
- The school council president
- Past and present school councillors
- Community and Stakeholder Relations Branch (DEECD)
- Volunteer for a subcommittee that interests you



Professional development available for school councillors

- Online professional development packages and information sheets
- Regional workshops and seminars
- Professional development provided by peak school council organisations (e.g. VICCSO, ASCIV)



For more information

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils>
- <http://www.asciv.org.au> Association of School Councils in Victoria (ASCIV)
- <http://www.viccsso.org.au> Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO)
- <http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au> State Services Authority (SSA)



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