

## SP HO2: The role of school council president

Scenario	Considerations / response
<p><b>Scenario 1:</b></p> <p>Your school council meeting is about to start. Your membership according to the council Ministerial Order 1280 Constitution of Government School Councils is 14 (seven parent members, four school employee members including the principal, and three community members). Two of your parent members are department employees at other schools and one community position remains unfilled. Present at tonight’s meeting are the principal, three teachers, two community members (including the president) and four parents, one of whom is a department employee. Do you have a quorum?</p>	<p>Your council must have at least half the members currently holding office present and non-Department members must be in the majority. Parent members who work for the Department elsewhere are considered Department members for the purpose of a quorum.</p> <p>There are 10 memmbers present out of 13 current members, so the total numbers are satisfactory for a quorum.</p> <p>However, of the 10 members present, 5 are employed by the Department (the principal, 3 teachers and 1 parent). This means that the non-department members are NOT in the majority.</p> <p>There is no quorum.</p>
<p><b>Scenario 2:</b></p> <p>You receive a letter from a parent upset at how the principal has handled a situation that resulted in her son being suspended for three days. The parent believes the suspension was not warranted and the principal was victimising her son. The parent wants this matter raised at school council and plans to attend the next council meeting to see that it is.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is <b>not</b> a matter for council but an operational matter</li> <li>• You should respond promptly to the parent advising them of the parent complaint policy. If the parent has tried to resolve the matter with the principal and is not happy with the outcome they should contact the region.</li> <li>• Advise the parent that the letter will not be tabled or discussed at school council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 3:</b></p> <p>Your school council has been considering a contentious issue for several meetings. Finally, a motion has been put and the voting sees five votes for and five votes against. As president and chair, your vote went for the affirmative. Now what do you do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event of a tied vote, the chairperson gets a casting voe, even if they have already voted</li> <li>• The chair’s casting vote can be different to their original vote</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the closeness of the cote, council might consider developing a communication strategy for how this decision is to be communicated outside of council</li> <li>• Remind the council that the decisions made by council must be those of the group rather than of an individual. Council members contribute their individual perspectives to discussions and thereby assist the council to come to an informed decision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 4:</b></p> <p>School council decides it is time to review the student dress code and sets up a working party to consider this. Department policy states the community must be consulted on changes to the school's dress code. How should you proceed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The working party could invite members of a parent committee, student representatives and other school groups to join its discussions</li> <li>• An online survey could be set up and community members encouraged to participate</li> <li>• Focus groups could be run at different times to enable parents to contribute to the discussion with interpreters made available as needed</li> <li>• Students could run focus groups with other students (e.g. via Junior School Council, Student Representative Council)</li> <li>• Pen and paper surveys (including visual surveys) could be left at the office or other locations where families gather.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 5:</b></p> <p>As president of the school council, you are approached by a small group of staff members who would like to have a discussion with you about the school. You feel this is positive and agree to meet with them. At the meeting the group begins to make direct comments about their dissatisfaction with some teacher colleagues and the principal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should stop the conversation</li> <li>• This is <b>not</b> a matter for the president or for school council</li> <li>• You should direct the teachers to the school's complaints policy. This will explain that complaints such as theirs should be directed to the regional office of the Department</li> </ul>

- Complaints about teachers should be raised with the principal. Complaints about the principal should be raised with the regional office of the Department.

**SP HO3: The effective school council president**

	<b>Never</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>1</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>2</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>3</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>4</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>5</b> (Mark with an X)	<b>Always</b> (Mark with an X)
I meet the school council president before every school council meeting to discuss the agenda and any issues of concern.							
I make myself available to the principal and the school whenever needed.							
I am open, fair and candid in my dealings with all school council colleagues.							
I support all school council colleagues and ensure they are heard at school council meetings.							
I look for opportunities to build relationships with others in the local community, particularly influential individuals and groups.							
I understand and refer to the school council code of conduct and school council Standing Orders at every meeting.							

**SP HO4: Scenarios**

Scenario	Response
<p><b>Scenario 1:</b></p> <p>You are a school council President at a government secondary school. As required by Ministerial Order 1098) you have two student members in your school council. Although they have the same role and responsibilities as other council members, including full voting rights, you find their views are often overlooked or minimized by councillors (both parent and staff members), and this has resulted in the students being reluctant to put forward their views of the student community. You're looking to find a way to more actively include their views.</p>	
<p><b>Scenario 2:</b></p> <p>It appears that two members of school council meet prior to each school council meeting to agree what they want to talk about and the approach they will take when responding to agenda items. This has resulted in their voices being those that are most frequently heard, often shutting down other views and potentially distorting the views of council.</p>	

<p><b>Scenario 3:</b></p> <p>One school council member continually dominates school council meetings, no matter what agenda item is being discussed. You are aware that some other members hardly speak at meetings.</p>	
<p><b>Scenario 4:</b></p> <p>You are the newly elected president of a school council that has had a largely unchanged membership for six years. You joined council for the first-time last year and were encouraged to nominate for president this year. You're excited about the opportunities this presents, however you have already experienced a reluctance of council members to change any aspect of how they currently operate. This includes a lack of preparation for meetings from both parents and staff members, a reluctance to stay focused on the governance work of council and instead the desire to chat about what's happening in classrooms, and the adding of agenda items at the meeting for discussion.</p>	
<p><b>Scenario 5:</b></p> <p>You are about to close the school council meeting when a school council member indicates they wish to have a matter</p>	

discussed. They start by saying some parents are concerned about the behaviour of a teacher outside school hours.

### SP HO5: Scenarios and responses

Scenario	Response
<p><b>Scenario 1:</b></p> <p>You are a school council President at a government secondary school. As required by Ministerial Order 1098) you have two student members in your school council. Although they have the same role and responsibilities as other council members, including full voting rights, you find their views are often overlooked or minimized by councillors (both parent and staff members), and this has resulted in the students being reluctant to put forward their views of the student community. You're looking to find a way to more actively include their views.</p>	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the principal and discuss your concerns. As preparation for this meeting, bring some examples of the behaviours you have noticed and the impact that this had on the student members.</li> <li>• Consider using a protocol where all council members views are sought at points throughout the meeting.</li> <li>• With the principal meet separately with the student members and ask them what support they need to enable them to be heard at Council. This might include additional training, active support during the meeting, providing information in a student-friendly way, etc. Stress that the views of the school students are really important for council to undertake its work effectively.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 2:</b></p> <p>It appears that two members of school council meet prior to each school council meeting to agree what they want to talk about and the approach they will take when responding to agenda items. This has resulted in their voices being those that</p>	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At a meeting revisit the standing orders and stress the importance of all views being heard at council.</li> <li>• Consider using protocols that engage all voices and actively seek differing views. The principal will be able to help in sourcing these protocols.</li> </ul>

are most frequently heard, often shutting down other views and potentially distorting the views of council.

- If their behaviour does not change, discuss with the principal and consider having a conversation with the council members outside of the meeting.

**Scenario 3:**

One school council member continually dominates school council meetings, no matter what agenda item is being discussed. You are aware that some other members hardly speak at meetings.

**Response:**

- Have in the standing orders (meeting etiquette), that all conversations go through the chair.
- Use phrases such as, "Let's see what other members think."
- If one council member still dominates the meeting, discuss with the principal and consider having a conversation with the council member outside the meeting.

**Scenario 4:**

You are the newly elected president of a school council that has had a largely unchanged membership for six years. You joined council for the first-time last year and were encouraged to nominate for president this year. You're excited about the opportunities this presents, however you have already experienced a reluctance of council members to change any aspect of how they currently operate. This includes a lack of preparation for meetings from both parents and staff members, a reluctance to stay focused on the governance work of council and instead the desire to chat about what's happening in classrooms, and the adding of agenda items at the meeting for discussion.

**Response:**

- At your next meeting, ask councillors what they're hoping to achieve in the current year. Acknowledge the experience they bring to the table and share with them your excitement at being President and what you are hoping to achieve.
- Using the standing orders as a guide, discuss now the meetings can be made as effective as possible, ensuring the focus stays on the work of school council and is directed at ensuring the best possible outcomes for the students. Use examples to highlight the difference between the governance role of council and operational role of the school leadership (eg. what's happening in the classroom).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the principal to source training for the whole of school council using realistic situations for discussion, based on your experience.</li> <li>• Download and use the <a href="#">meeting template</a> from the Department's website. Explain to Councillors how items can be put on the agenda in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>• Ensure that you and the principal are both in agreement on the focus and effective running of school council meetings.</li> <li>• Suggest the School council use the Department's <a href="#">School Council Self-assessment Tool</a> to assess their strengths and help identify areas for further training and development. Explain that all councils are required to undertake this self-assessment annually and by doing this earlier in the year Council will be able to make the most of the training and development options.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scenario 5:</b></p> <p>You are about to close the school council meeting when a school council member indicates they wish to have a matter discussed. They start by saying some parents are concerned about the behaviour of a teacher outside school hours.</p>	<p><b>Response:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is <u>not</u> a matter for school council.</li> <li>• The president should stop the member speaking and suggest the issue is raised with the principal outside of the meeting.</li> <li>• If a councillor wants to raise an issue, it should be discussed with the president/principal in advance of the meeting.</li> <li>• Take the opportunity to explain the process by which items are added to the agenda and stress that this needs to occur in advance of the school council meeting.</li> </ul>

**SP HO6: Reflection**

Question	Reflection
Who are the school's community?	
<p>How are the school community's views currently obtained?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Families</li> <li>- Students</li> <li>- Community organisations and agencies</li> <li>- Business</li> </ul>	
How might you learn more about your school community?	

