# Elmdale Public School Council Constitution

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## Name of this council - Article 1

The school advisory committee for Elmdale Public School is called the Elmdale School Council (ESC).

## Definitions - Article 2

In this document:

* “Council” means the Elmdale School Council
* “Board” means the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
* “Parent” means any mother, father or guardian of a child enrolled at Elmdale
* “Ministry” means the Ontario Ministry of Education
* “Staff” means the teaching and non-teaching staff at Elmdale, including, where applicable, administrative staff

## Objectives - Article 3

The Council exists as an advisory body to the school Principal and the Board. The Council will pursue these objectives:

* **Promote effective communication** between parents, staff, students and the community
* **Propose and support fundraising and other initiatives** maximize educational opportunities and enhance school life
* **Provide** **an effective voice** to promote the best interests of the school
* **Help** **the school** to meet the educational, social, health, emotional, and recreational needs of students
* **Establish and coordinate** **committees** of the Council to engage in activities to help meet these objectives

## Affiliations - Article 4

1. The Council is affiliated with the Ottawa Carleton Assembly of Councils (OCASC). Council will choose one or more persons to represent the interests of Elmdale at OCASC.
2. It requires a majority of votes in a general meeting to:

* affiliate Council with another organization, or
* change an existing affiliation

Council membership must be given notice before such a vote.

## Composition, roles and responsibilities - Article 5

### Voting members

1. The Council will consist of the following voting members. These members have the responsibilities, privileges and voting rights described in this Article and in Article 7.

#### Co-chair(s)

* Communicates regularly with Principal, staff, parents and community
* Prepares agendas for and chairs Council meetings
* Ensures ongoing and active communication with parents
* Represents school at Trustee and Board meetings as needed
* Ensures all Council-sponsored activities are organized safely and effectively
* Approves all Council-related correspondence
* Makes monetary decisions under $200
* Prepares and submits annual report on Council activities to the Principal and Board
* Determines what will be brought to Council for a vote
* Promotes consensus among Council members, and calls for a vote when Council doesn’t reach consensus
* Votes only in the event of a tie

#### Treasurer

* Receives, disburses and accounts for all funds collected, earned or otherwise received by the Council
* Ensures the safe-keeping of the Council finances in line with the policies and procedures of the Board
* Provides a monthly report to the Council. This includes:
  + the latest bank balance,
  + an estimate of the total funds committed to date
  + the total uncommitted funds

#### Internal communications coordinator

* Takes minutes at Council meetings; prepares minutes in timely manner for approval by Chair
* Distributes relevant materials (minutes, agenda, etc.) prior to Council meetings
* Works with the external communications coordinator to publish council meeting minutes on the website in a timely manner

#### External communications coordinator

* Maintains and updates
  + the Council website
  + other Council external communication media
  + social media platforms
* Works with the Internal communications coordinator to publish council meeting minutes on the website in a timely manner

#### Fundraising coordinator

* Leads a committee of council members to support and promote fundraising activities
* Reviews new fundraising opportunities to be considered by Council
* Oversees committees conducting Council fundraising events
* Works with staff, treasurer and council to explore ways to help other OCDSB schools in their fundraising efforts and/or needs

#### Education coordinator

* Works with staff and council to identify potential workshops/guest speakers for parents and/or students
* Coordinates promotion of approved educational events

#### Healthy Earth coordinator

* Leads a committee of parents to promote and support Elmdale students’ appreciation for and engagement with the natural world/environment
* Facilitates and supports activities related to the environment as well as children’s health and wellness
* Oversees improvements to the school grounds including the play structures and gardens.
* Works with staff and parents on the Garden Committee and reports back to Council on garden activities.

#### Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) coordinator

* Leads a committee of parents to champion and promote an atmosphere of openness, respect for and celebration of diversity at Elmdale
* Provides leadership and direction on Council and within parent community to find opportunities to integrate EDI principles in all aspects of student life. These include:
  + anti-racism
  + disability
  + gender
  + sexual orientation
* Supports staff to integrate topics related to social justice in learning activities
* Advocates on behalf of all Elmdale families on matters or concerns relating to EDI
* Works with other Council coordinators to incorporate EDI in all Council activities

#### Volunteer coordinator

* Recruits volunteers for various school & Council activities
* Works with Fundraising coordinator to organize and schedule volunteers for school events

#### OCASC representative

* Attends OCASC monthly meetings and votes on behalf of Elmdale
* Informs staff, council and parents of issues being discussed by OCASC

**Arts representative**

* Facilitates opportunities to engage students, staff and parent community on a broad range of arts and cultural experiences
* Establishes and maintains relationships with arts groups and representatives from other schools
* Liaises with staff, parent community and Council to suggest yearly arts activities

#### Community representative

* Promotes school and council activities with the community
* Appointed by Council to represent the community’s point of view
* Ideally has no children currently enrolled at Elmdale, but resides or works within school’s zone

#### School travel planning representative

* Advocates for the safe travel of children to school, including promotion of the twice yearly “walk to school” days
* Works with staff, city, board, OSTA, to advocate for safe travel of Elmdale students to school
* Liaises with implicated neighbourhood associations also working to improve traffic concerns and associated concerns

#### Members at large

* Vote when required on Council matters
* Attend meetings and consult on Council issues and provide feedback
* Participate on Council committees and supports coordinators as required
* Assist in communicating Council activities with parents

#### Teacher representative

* Represents the viewpoints of the teaching staff at Elmdale on Council
* Appointed by principal and teaching staff through a process established by them

#### Non-teaching staff representative

* Represents the viewpoints of the non-teaching and administrative staff at Elmdale on Council
* Appointed by non-teaching and administrative staff through a process established by them

### Non-voting members

The council includes the following non-voting members:

#### School principal**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

* Attends Council meetings
* Considers each recommendation made by Council and reports on actions taken in response to the recommendation
* Advises Council on matters concerning school and/or Board policies and procedures
* Solicits views on any matter, including:
  + establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines to student achievement
  + accountability of the education system to parents
  + communication of those plans to the public
* May participate on Council committees
* Distributes material identified by the Ministry for distribution to Council
* Acts as a resource to the Council on laws, regulations, and board policies
* Acts as a liaison between the Council, parent community, school, and the OCDSB

#### School vice principal

* Attends Council meetings
* Considers each recommendation made by Council and reports on the action taken in response to the recommendation
* Advises Council on matters concerning school and/or Board policies and procedures
* Solicits views on any matter, including:
  + establishment or amendment of school policies and guidelines to student achievement
  + accountability of the education system to parents
  + communication of those plans to the public
* May participate on Council committees
* Distributes material identified by the Ministry for distribution to Council
* Acts as a resource to the Council on laws, regulations, and board policies
* Acts as a liaison between the community and the school

1. The Council will strive for high levels of participation. It will make every attempt to fill all positions, aiming for a minimum of 9 members, up to a maximum of 45.
2. A Board employee who works at Elmdale Public School and has children attending the school cannot serve as a parent member on the Council. However, the employee can be elected as either the teaching or non-teaching staff representative.
3. Parent members must form the majority of Council members.
4. The Council may form or dissolve further committees or sub-commitees. The Chair of those committees or sub-committees will be a voting member of Council. Membership on committees is not restricted to members of Council. The name and mandate of committees or sub-committees will be established by a vote of Council.

## Membership & elections - Article 6

The school Principal must advertise the date, time and location of Council elections at least 14 days prior.

Council members must be elected/appointed within the first 30 days of the start of the school year. This is barring extraordinary circumstances that will be determined by the co-chairs.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Each parent of a student enrolled in the school is entitled to one vote for each vacant position on the council.

Membership in the Council will be determined by the following processes:

1. **Parent Members**

1. All council positions will be elected or acclaimed.
2. All parents of students enrolled in the school are invited to become involved in the elections by:

* nominating themselves if they are interested
* nominating another parent
* attending the election to vote on the nominated members

1. If there are the same number or fewer candidates than positions, the candidate(s) will be acclaimed.
2. If more than one candidate wishes to fill the same Council position, voting by secret ballot will occur.

The Principal must communicate the names of elected Council members to the school community within 30 days of Council elections.

## Term of membership & vacancies - Article 7

1. The term of office for Council is roughly one year. It begins upon election/appointment and ends the following September when a new Council is nominated.
2. Elected members may seek other terms of membership.

3. The Chair or Co-chair positions will be limited to two consecutive terms (2 years in total). There is no restriction on the number of terms for other Council members.

4. Council can fill all vacancies, with notice, either by election or by appointment. When a vacant position is filled, the new member's term will expire at the time of the next election.

5. Council members who relinquish their duties may sit as Members at Large until their term of office ends.

## Committees - Article 8

1. All Committees will present to Council a plan for their activities for the year. This will be done as soon as possible in each school year.
2. Committee chairs have discretion to spend to the limit of their committee budget. Expenditures over $250 must be discussed with Council during monthly updates.

## Meetings - Article 9

* There will be one Annual General Meeting (AGM) within 30 days of the start of the school year. It will be open to all members of the school community to hold elections and conduct other business of Council.
* Council will hold regular meetings at least six times in each school year. The Principal is responsible to provide notice of the dates, times and location of all meetings to parents. The community at large may also be given notice of meetings and informed of Council activities.
* Meetings of the Council will be open to members of the school community and general public[[3]](#footnote-3). No such person may be excluded from the meeting except for disruptive or inappropriate behaviour. Discussion at meetings will be open to members of the school community. Only elected members of Council have voting rights.
* Any parent, member of Council or other interested person may place an item on the agenda. To do this they must:
* notify the Chair at least one week before the next meeting
* provide enough information to allow the Chair to decide if the matter is appropriate for discussion by Council
* The Chair/Co-Chair may call special meetings of the Council on an issue, upon written request from at least three members.

* Minutes of all meetings will be kept by the Internal Communications Coordinator. They will send a copy of the minutes to members prior to the next meeting. All minutes must also be available for review by any person.
* Members of Council are expected to conduct themselves and interact respectfully with the Elmdale community. This includes being equitable and inclusive to everyone, as well as welcoming of diversity, ability and lived experiences. Members also have a duty to consider the best interests of all students when making decisions.
* Members of Council will make reasonable efforts to attend all Council meetings
* To reach quorum to make decisions at Council meetings, all of the following conditions must be met:
  + The School Principal or designate, must be present at the meeting
  + At least 7 members, or 30% of voting Council members must be present (whatever is larger)
  + A majority of the members present must be parent/guardian members
* At the beginning of each school year, the chair or co-chairs will determine quorum based on these rules. This will de done following the election of council. The chair or co-chairs must make rules for quorum known to members.
* For any motion decided by a vote, the minutes must record:

1. the wording of the motion
2. the person making the motion and the person seconding the motion
3. the number of voters in favour, against and abstaining from the motion

## Decision-making - Article 10

### 1. Council meetings

* Consensus is the preferred procedure for decision-making, with issues being put to a vote as required.
* The Chair/Co-chairs will be responsible for determining when consensus has been achieved, or whether a vote is necessary.
* The results of a vote will be declared, recorded and noted in the minutes by the Internal Communications Coordinator. A majority in favour, within quorum, is required for a motion to pass.
* Two parents of the same household may share one parent position so long as:
  + both names appear on the official nomination form
  + they were elected to Council with the understanding that one vote will be shared between the two parents.

In the event of disagreement between shared participants, they will officially be counted as abstaining in the vote count.

### 2. Electronic Decision-making

Council sometimes needs to make time-sensitive decisions between meetings. At the discretion of The Chair or Co-Chairs a Council decision may be made electronically if quorum is met. All decisions made electronically must be recorded in the minutes of the next scheduled Council meeting.

Committees may also make time-sensitive decision electronically if quorum is met.

These parameters must be followed to make decisions electronically:

* Decisions regarding finances for expenditures under $1000.
* Decisions can be time-sensitive with a required date and time for responses. The Chair or Co-chairs may extend the deadline where necessary.
* Council members will reply in a way that is visible to other voting council methods (e.g. reply all, survey, etc), unless a blind-vote format has been requested.
* Results of a vote will be reported to all Council members within 24 hours.
* The Chair or Co-chairs vote only to break a tie.
* If no quorum is reached, the issue will be tabled at a special meeting. It will be called:
  + at the discretion of the Chair or Co-Chairs, **or**
  + at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting
* If a Council member does not have electronic access, the Chair will receive the member's vote by phone.

## Conflict of interest - Article 11

Members of Council must declare a conflict of interest in matters in which they or their families stand to benefit directly or indirectly by decisions of Council. A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived or potential.

If an issue or agenda item arises during a Council meeting where a Council member is in a conflict of interest, the member must declare a conflict of interest immediately and will not participate in any discussion or vote.

Any member of the Council may declare a conflict of interest for another member who has not done so. The party declaring the conflict of interest must provide reasons to explain why they have declared it. In the event that a dispute arises as to the presence of a conflict of interest, the matter will be resolved by a Council vote. The members involved in the dispute will not vote.

## Conflict resolution - Article 12

It is the goal of the Council to foster and maintain a spirit of cooperation, inclusiveness and respect. It is also hoped that most issues can be resolved through discussion and consensus. In the event that a disagreement or conflict arises, the following steps will be taken:

1. If a Council member becomes disruptive, the Chair/Co-Chair will ask for order.
2. If order is not restored, the Chair/Co-Chair may direct the individual(s) to leave the meeting. The removal from one meeting does not prevent individuals from participating in future Council meetings.
3. The Chair/Co-Chair may request that the individual(s) involved in conflict participate in a special meeting to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting will not be considered a meeting of the Council.
4. The Chair/Co-chair may the Principal or an independent third party to intervene to help a resolve the dispute. An independent third party may be a board official or another individual mutually agreed on by the parties involved in the dispute.
5. If an issue cannot be resolved at the local level, the Chair/Co-Chair may request the Superintendent of Schools to provide direction.
6. Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict must be signed and respected in full by all parties to the agreement.
7. Should a resolution not be reached, Council members may vote to eject the individual(s) in question. In such a case they will be barred from rejoining Council for the remainder of the school year. Council members may vote to replace the vacated position.

## Amendments to this constitution - Article 13

The Council Constitution may be amended by approval of a motion by a majority of members of Council present and voting. Except under exceptional circumstances as determined by the Chair or co-chairs:

* A period of two weeks’ notice must be given for such a motion.
* The details of the proposed amendments must be circulated to all members with the notice of the meeting.

Upon approval, an amendment will take effect immediately.

Council will consider whether any amendments are necessary to this constitution at least once every two school years.

1. According to the Ministry of Education's "School Councils: A Guide for Members,” the only non-voting member is the Principal and/or designate (5.6) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ontario Regulation 612/00 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ontario Regulation 612/00, section 12-4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)