

# **W.O. Mitchell School Council CONSTITUTION**

## **Article One – Name and Purpose**

Our school is W. O. Mitchell Elementary School in Bridlewood, Kanata, Ontario. W.O. Mitchell falls under the jurisdiction of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB, or simply the Board).

Our organization is called the W.O. Mitchell School Council, hereafter referred to as the Council or the School Council.

The School Community consists of the people living within the attendance boundaries of the school, parents/guardians with children attending the school on a transfer, school staff, and the students.

The main purpose of the School Council is to enhance the school experience for all students, to improve student achievement, and to facilitate communication between the school and the School Community. The Council has the legal responsibility to research parent and community opinions and to use this research to advise the school administration and the Board, as appropriate, on any matter that impacts student achievement at W.O. Mitchell. The Council also plans activities, hosts special events, and raises funds to help provide a unique and special experience for the school students.

Note that all fundraising done by the Council should conform to Board policy P.052.SCO – Fund-raising, and Board procedure PR.540.SCO – Fund-raising.

## **Article Two – Officers and Members**

The Council consists of the following Voting Members, who have equal privileges and voting rights:

- Up to eighteen (18) parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school, consisting of four Officers and up to fourteen Members at Large
- One teacher employed by the school, other than the principal or vice-principal
- One non-teaching employee of the school (if possible)
- One community representative (if possible)

And the following non-voting member:

- The school principal

The Council Officers are the Chair, Vice-chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary are the signing officers of the Council. Each officer position must be held by a parent member of Council. The Chair position cannot be held by any employee of the Board. (Eligibility details are provided in OCDSB Policy P.014.SCO, School Councils.)

The Members at Large may take on specific roles, or may remain as general Members at Large. Specific roles that may be present on Council include:

Lunch Program Committee Coordinator  
Fundraising Coordinator  
OCASC Representative  
Newsletter Editor  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Art Appreciation Committee Coordinator  
WOMFEST Coordinator  
Craft Fair Coordinator  
Webmaster

Each Voting Member of Council holds their term for one full year; members are welcome to rejoin Council but must be elected again in successive years.

Note that all members of Council and all sub-committee members must conform to Board policy P.067.SCO – Volunteers and Board procedure PR.555.SCO – Volunteers.

### **Article Three – Member Responsibilities**

**The Chair** – The Chair of the School Council acts as the official spokesperson of the School Council. He or she attends the Trustee's Inter-school meetings and communicates with the Principal on a regular basis. He or she chairs the monthly meetings, and prepares the agenda for each meeting in advance. The Chair updates the Principal Profile on an annual basis, writes the annual report at the end of the year, and ensures that all other Council documents are kept up to date and properly managed. The Chair creates the budget for the year (subject to Council's approval) and ensures that a proper record of all financial transactions is maintained. The Chair participates in regular communication with the chairs of the various sub-committees of Council. The Chair is a signing officer for the Council.

**The Vice Chair** – The Vice Chair assists the Chair of the Council and acts as Chair in his/her absence. The Vice Chair is responsible for records management, which includes maintaining an archive of Council documents (agendas, minutes, etc.), maintaining the Council bulletin board (he or she may do it themselves or arrange for another Council member to carry out the work), and facilitating the transfer of documents from one Council to the next. The remaining work of the Vice Chair often comprises a sharing of the duties of the Chair. The Vice Chair is a signing officer for the Council.

**The Secretary** – The Secretary of the Council is responsible for maintaining a full and accurate accounting of all School Council meetings through the taking of minutes. In conjunction with the Chair, he or she ensures the adequate notice of meetings and sets the meeting schedule for the school year. After each meeting, the Secretary distributes the minutes to all council members by email, to solicit feedback and edits. He or she then resends them for an email vote for approval before the next council meeting. The Secretary is responsible for all Council correspondence, which involves receiving incoming mail and distributing it to members' mailboxes, and sending out official notices and invitations as required. The Secretary is a signing officer for the Council.

**The Treasurer** – The Treasurer ensures safekeeping of the School Council finances in accordance with the policies and procedures of the OCDSB and provides accounting thereof, as required, to the Board and the Council. The role of the Treasurer is to set up and maintain a detailed record of all income and expenses along with accompanying

receipts and invoices; to check the accuracy and consistency of monthly bank statements; to enforce the Council's rules on incoming and delinquent cheques; and to report monthly to School Council on fundraising and other revenues and expenditures. The Treasurer deposits all incoming cheques and signs all outgoing cheques. The Treasurer is a signing officer for the Council.

**Members at Large** – Members at Large commit to attending all School Council meetings to provide input on how council funds should be spent, and to participate in planning and decision-making. They promote and advertise the activities of the Council to the School Community, listen to the views and opinions of the School Community, and report back to the Council. They may attend information or training sessions and pass this information on to the School Community. Members at Large also often step in to volunteer and help plan various special events during the year. Members at Large are not signing officers for the Council.

Other Council roles and responsibilities may change from year to year. For an up-to-date list on specific member roles, please view the Council's website.

**Principal** – The duties of the Principal with regards to Council are outlined in detail in OCDSB Policy P.014.SCO, School Councils, under Operations.

**Teaching Staff Representative** – The Teaching Staff Representative on Council should attend all Council meetings, to speak on behalf of the teachers when decisions are being made. The Teacher has a vote on all motions before Council and is a fully participating member in all discussions and debates.

**Non-Teaching Staff Representative** – The Non-Teaching Staff Representative position will be filled if an interested person on the administrative staff can be found who is interested in becoming a member of Council. This representative attends all Council meetings and speaks on behalf of the non-teaching staff when decisions are being made. The staff member has a vote on all motions before Council and is a fully participating member in all discussions and debates.

**Community Representative** – The Community Representative will be filled if an interested non-parent/guardian adult from the community can be found. This representative attends all Council meetings and speaks on behalf of the School Community at large when decisions are being made. The Community Representative has a vote on all motions before Council and is a fully participating member in all discussions and debates.

#### **Article Four – Meeting Schedule, Quorum, and Voting Rights**

The Council meets once a month at the school at a date and time to be set by the Chair. All members of the School Community and the general public are welcome to attend; and time will be set aside at each meeting for questions or comments from non-Council members. Parents of students at the school will be notified of the meeting schedule through the Council website, the Council newsletter, and the Council bulletin board. Meetings will start promptly at the scheduled time.

Council members are expected to attend Council meetings. In the event that a member cannot attend, the Chair should be notified in advance. If the Chair cannot make the

meeting, the Vice Chair or another Council member can chair the meeting at the request of the Chair. In the event that the Chair has not delegated a replacement, the Council Members in attendance shall nominate a replacement. The Principal or Vice-Principal must be in attendance.

Special meetings of Council, aside from the regular monthly meetings, may be called by the Chair if required. At least half of the Council members (i.e. a quorum) must agree to attend the meeting in writing (email is acceptable).

A quorum is achieved when a majority of Voting Members of the Council are present, and the majority of members present are parent/guardian members. All Voting Members in attendance are entitled to one vote on each motion before Council.

Once the Chair feels that consensus on a motion has been reached through discussion, the Chair will call for a vote on that motion. If a majority of all Voting Members of Council (not just a majority of those present) votes in favour, then the motion is passed.

Email is a valuable communication tool for the Council between meetings, and votes on motions can be made via email. All Council members should have a valid email address; mailboxes can be provided for those members that do not have one. Motions are usually brought via email in the case where:

- Time is of the essence, i.e. a new situation arises that cannot wait until the next meeting; or
- Motions discussed at the previous meeting could not be passed due to time constraints or lack of a quorum; or
- Minutes from the previous meeting require review and approval.

To conduct a motion and vote via email, the following process applies:

- Only the Chair can call for an email motion. The Chair sends out the motion to all members. (The Secretary may send around the minutes from the previous meeting for review by the Council members.)
- Once the motion is sent to all members, any member is free to comment, suggest changes, or ask clarifying questions. Any comments should be sent to all Council members (i.e. via the "Reply-All" function) so that the discussion remains open and transparent.
- Ideally, Council members will be given 48 hours to comment or respond to the motion; in cases where time does not permit this window, the motion will clearly state the cut-off date and time for discussion.
- Once consensus is achieved or the time period has elapsed, the Chair will call for a vote with an email.
- All Council members should "Reply-All" to the vote email, to maintain transparency.
- The Chair will declare the motion passed or failed in an email to all members.

A full record of the email motion, discussion, and vote will be added to the next meeting's minutes.

## **Article Five – Committees and Their Membership**

The Council is free to form subcommittees as needed to address specific issues. Subcommittee members are appointed by Council. Subcommittees do not need to be

made up exclusively of Council members; however, at least one parent/guardian Council member must be on the committee and must report back to Council on a regular basis.

Some of the recurring and ongoing Council committees include:

Craft Fair Committee – Plans and runs the annual fall craft fair, bake sale, and silent auction.

WOMFEST Committee – Plans and runs the annual WOMFEST celebration at the end of the year; this event is not a fundraiser.

Lunch Program Committee – Runs hot lunch programs; committee members take orders, deliver cheques to the treasurer, and may be required to be in the school on lunch program days to distribute food.

Art Appreciation Committee – Visits classrooms throughout the school year to make a short presentation that introduces students to a work of art.

Please see the Council website for an up-to-date list of currently sitting committees.

### **Article Six -- Affiliation with Other Organizations**

The Council may seek affiliation with other organizations that have similar purposes. Some examples include the Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) and People For Education.

### **Article Seven – Election Procedure**

Parent/guardian Council members will be selected within 30 days of the start of the school year, at the first Council meeting of the year in September. The Council officers will be selected at this same election meeting.

The current Council is responsible for promoting the election of a new Council and for recruiting interested parents/guardians. As well, Council should make it known to all parents of all students at the school that they are welcome to attend the election meeting and vote at that meeting for the new members of Council. To that end, the Council must advertise the election meetings at least 14 days in advance of the elections, but are encouraged to advertise the dates as soon and as often as possible.

Some ideas for Council to promote the election meeting include:

- Putting notice of the election meeting in the last Council newsletter of the year;
- Putting notice of the election meeting in the first School newsletter of the year;
- Posting notice of the meeting on the Council bulletin board;
- Posting notice of the meeting and call for volunteers on the Council website;
- Sending a flyer home with all students in the first two weeks of the year; and/or
- Attending the JK information session near the end of the previous school year.

At the Council election meeting, the outgoing Chair will go through the Council positions one at a time, including the officers, named positions, and Members at Large. For each position, the outgoing Chair will call for nominations. Parents can nominate themselves, and no seconder is required for a nomination. If there is only one nomination for a position, no vote is required and the nominee is acclaimed into the position. In the event

there are multiple nominations for a position, or where the number of parent representatives would exceed a total of 18, elections will be held by secret ballot. All parents of students at WOM who are present at the meeting are entitled to one vote. If more than one parent/guardian is interested in a position (including the Chair position), that position may be shared, at the discretion of the outgoing Chair, as long as the total number of parent representatives does not exceed 18.

The new Council members become active as soon as the election meeting concludes.

If any positions cannot be filled at the September meeting, they may be filled via acclimation at any time during the following school year. See Article Eight, Filling Vacancies, for more information.

The Principal will ensure the selection of the teacher representative, and the non-teaching staff representative. The community representative will be appointed by the newly elected Council.

### **Article Eight – Filling Vacancies**

Should a parent/guardian position become vacant before the next election, the Council can fill the vacancy by appointment. Replacement Council members can be recruited from the non-elected candidates from the most recent election, or by sending out a notice calling for volunteers to the parents in the school community.

If the position cannot be filled, the remaining Council members will make up the Council.

When a vacant spot is filled by appointment, the new member's term will expire at the next election.

### **Article Nine – Conflict of Interest**

Any time the school does business with the potential for monetary gain/loss with any person, agency, or company, and a member of the Council has a vested interest in any way with that particular person, agency, or company, that member will declare a conflict of interest to the Council. The member under conflict will not discuss or vote on any resolution relating to the matter.

In addition, Council members will not accept favours or economic benefits from any person, organization, or agency known to be seeking business contracts with the school.

### **Article Ten – Resolving Conflict**

Every Council member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concern or opinion about the issue under dispute. Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times; speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption.

The Chair has the responsibility to clarify the statements made by all speakers, and to try to find common ground that will satisfy the interests of all members.

If a Council member or participant becomes disruptive, the Chair should ask for order. If order is not restored, the Chair may direct the individuals to leave the meeting. The removal from one meeting does not prevent individuals from participating in future meetings of Council.

The Chair may request the disputing individual(s) to participate in a special meeting to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting should not be construed as a meeting of Council.

If an issue cannot be resolved at the local level, the Chair or Principal will request the Superintendent of Schools to provide direction.

### **Article Eleven – Records Management**

Records comprising four full years of Council business shall be kept in accordance with the *Education Act*, Regulation 612/00, s.16, and shall include: the budget, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, monthly financial reports and the annual report. Hard copies of the current and the previous year's records will be kept at the school for examination by any person. Electronic copies of the current and four previous year's records will be maintained and posted on the Council's website.

All records older than four years old will be destroyed.

### **Article Twelve – Incoming Cheques**

Cheques written to the Council pertaining to any matter shall *not* be posted dated and must include the full name, address and phone number of the issuer of the cheque. If relevant (e.g. a cheque written for a lunch program), the name(s) of the applicable student must also be written on the cheque. Cheques that do not conform will be returned to the issuer and any associated application form(s) will not be processed.

At the beginning of each school year, the Council shall establish a policy on handling delinquent cheques.

### **Article Thirteen – Insurance**

The Board's insurance policy covers School Council activities "while they are working within their mandate to provide advice to the principal," as outlined in Board policy P014.SCO - School Councils.

However, activities that fall outside the School Council's mandate – for example, fundraising activities, extracurricular programs, and special events held outside of school hours – are not covered by the Board's liability insurance. The Council will therefore purchase additional liability insurance on a yearly basis to ensure that all Council members and parent volunteers are properly protected.

**Article Fourteen – Amending the Constitution**

Amendments to the Constitution require a 2/3 majority vote of the current Council to be passed.

This Constitution adopted by the W.O. Mitchell School Council, Kanata, Ontario, on:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Day, Month, Year)

\_\_\_\_\_

(Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_

Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_

Treasurer

\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary

## **Appendix A - Code of Ethics**

- A member shall consider the best interests of all students.
- A member shall be guided by the school's and the Board's mission statements.
- 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 not disclose confidential information.
- A member shall limit discussion at School Council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
- 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.

## **Appendix B - Operations Code for Council Website**

- When referring to School or Board policies or documents, link to the appropriate page if possible. Do not copy and repost information, as this information may get out of date.
- Protect student privacy at all times; no pictures or names of students should appear on the Council website. Check the names of images to make sure that filenames do not embed student names.
- The Council website should have a targeted audience of parents and other adults, not students or children. Still, all content on the site should be safe for students to view.
- No racist, pornographic, sectarian, or threatening content.
- No content that advertises or promotes any for-profit business, including sidebar ads, Google search ads, or links to companies that aim to sell products to parents or students. Links to School Council approved fundraiser companies are allowed, as long as those companies do not sell any items that are inappropriate for children.
- No support on the site for any political campaigns; no endorsements of any person running for any political office.
- No support on the site for any religious denomination.
- No inflammatory comments or insults.
- Copyright laws and licensing agreements must be respected.

### **Linking from the Website**

Links from the site are the same as endorsements of those sites. As a result, the Council website should not link to:

- any personal web pages for Council members, WOM staff, or WOM students
- any for-profit companies, with the exception of companies involved in a Council-sponsored fundraiser
- any sites with content that is inappropriate for children (this includes companies involved in a Council-sponsored fundraiser, if they sell items that are adult-oriented)

Over-linking should be avoided; that is, do not make multiple links to different pages on the same website.

The Council Webmaster will determine how the links are to be organized for best usability.

Links from the Council site should be checked on a regular basis to ensure that they are current.

### **Financial Reporting on the Website**

As the Council is required to have financial transparency, we will post the following information on the website each year:

- Annual predicted budget and operating procedures
- Annual report (financial summary for the year at the end of the year)
- Details on incoming receipts and outgoing expenses in each meeting's minutes

Additional detail on funds raised and money spent will be available to any parent/guardian upon request to Council.

Note that Board policies for web sites apply and take precedence over any ethical debates, specifically Policy P.100.IT (Acceptable Use of Computers and Internet/Intranet Technology) and Procedure P.622.IT (Acceptable Use of Computers and Internet/Intranet Technology).

## **Appendix C - Meeting Rules of Conduct**

Although Council meetings are fairly informal, we do use the following standard meeting rules as a guide. Our rules are taken from:

Call to Order: Meeting Rules and Procedures for Non-Profit Organizations

By Herb Perry

Copyright 1984

ISBN 0-9691683-0-6

Two copies of this book, which contain a full list of all meeting rules and procedures, are kept in the school library. Here are some of the meeting rules commonly used by Council.

### **Notice of Meeting**

1. For a committee or Board meeting, the notice of meeting should be sent about two to three weeks prior to the meeting. It should contain all information pertinent to the meeting, the association's name, name of the committee (if applicable), place, date, and time of the meeting. It should also include the estimated time of adjournment of the meeting.
2. For a general meeting, the notice should be sent at least one month prior to the meeting, and should include the association's name and the date, time, and place of the meeting.
3. Unless specified in an association's by-laws, a general meeting notice can be produced in one of three ways:
  - a. By a written notice sent to members by email.
  - b. By publishing the notice in the association magazine or newsletter.
  - c. By using a newspaper advertisement in appropriate areas where the majority of members reside, with the advertisement appearing twice, once during each of the two weeks prior to the meeting.

### **Call to Order**

1. Meetings start or reconvene only when the Chair calls the members to order. The Chair should try to do this at the appointed time, but he or she must exercise judgement concerning the number of members present and possible reasons for delays.
2. In the event of an unexplained absence of the Chair, neither the Vice Chair nor any other person may call the meeting to order until at least 15 minutes after the announced starting time.

### **Motions**

1. To be placed before a meeting for discussion, debate, and voting thereon, three things must happen to make a motion debatable. It requires, in this order, a mover, a seconder, and acceptance by the Chair.
2. When moved, seconded, and accepted, debate or discussion may begin. The mover has the right to be both the first and the last speaker.
3. Movers and seconders, like their fellow members, have the right to vote for or against or to abstain from voting on the motions they have moved and seconded.

## **Debate**

1. Discussion begins only after a motion has been accepted by the Chair.
2. The mover has the right to speak first.
3. The seconder has the right to speak second (this right is usually waved).
4. A member wishing to enter the discussion must so indicate to the Chair, usually by raising his or her hand or by standing, and wait to be recognized.
5. Members should begin their comments with, "Mr/Madam Chairperson, I support (or cannot support) the motion because..."
6. Normally the Chair will not permit a member to speak a second time until everyone who wishes to speak has spoken once. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of the Chair, for instance, when a particular comment requires clarification from the previous speaker.
7. All speakers should practice good manners and be considerate of the rights, including the right to differ, and feelings of other members.

## **Dissent**

1. A member who votes against a motion that carries, or who votes for a motion that is defeated, may have his or her dissent (from the majority) recorded in the minutes of the meeting by so requesting immediately after the result of the vote is announced.
2. A member who is absent from a meeting may have his or her dissent from any item(s) recorded in the minutes by a written request sent to the Minutes Secretary within a reasonable time (usually 10 days) after the draft minutes have been received.

## **Limiting Debate**

1. How long debate or discussion should continue before a vote is called is at the discretion of the Chair.
2. Members may request that "the vote now be called" or, when the vote is called, members may request that debate continue. The Chair accepts or denies the request. Members must then accept the ruling or challenge the Chair.

## **Voting**

1. Voting at any directors or members meeting may be by consensus, voice, show of hands, or poll at the discretion of the Chair.
2. Anyone entitled to vote may demand that a poll be used instead of consensus, voice vote, or show of hands, provided the request is made immediately after the result is announced.
3. A demand for a poll does not require a seconder.
4. A demand for a poll invalidates the previous result.
5. Anyone entitled to vote at a meeting of members may demand that a vote be by ballot provided the request is made before the vote is taken or immediately following any statement or consensus.

## **Majority**

1. At all meetings, unless otherwise provided by the by-laws or other statutes, a simple majority is sufficient to carry any motion.
2. A simple majority is one more than half of the votes cast.

## **Other Business**

Those wishing to have an item(s) added to the agenda must move an amendment to the motion to approve the agenda. If the amendment is seconded and carries, the item(s) becomes part of the agenda.

## **Rescind, Reconsider**

1. A motion, which has been acted on (money spend, contracts signed, meeting adjourned, etc.) may not be reconsidered.
2. Any motion passed at the previous meeting but not yet acted on may be reconsidered at the subsequent meeting by members moving, seconding, and passing a motion to do so.
3. Any motion defeated at the previous meeting may be reconsidered at the subsequent meeting by members moving, seconding, and passing a motion to do so.
4. To reconsider a motion that was dealt with earlier in the same meeting, the mover (but not the seconder) of the motion to reconsider must be a member who voted with the majority on the original vote.
5. A motion of business should be reconsidered once only.
6. Motions of adjournment cannot be reconsidered or rescinded.

## **Side Meetings**

1. No side meetings should be permitted by the Chair at any time during the meeting.
2. When members are being disruptive, the Chair should either wait for them to stop or ask them to stop talking.

## **Visitors**

1. Visitors (non-members) may be permitted to attend any meeting.
2. By invitation from the Chair, visitors may address the meeting, ask and answer questions, and take part in discussions.
3. Visitors are not permitted to move or second motions nor do they have members' rights to interrupt, challenge, or vote.
4. Members have the right to request a visitor(s) be excluded from the meeting. Whether the member's request is acted on depends on the ruling of the Chair or the vote of the members.

## **Appendix D – Related Policies and Regulations**

OCDSB Policy P.014.SCO – School Councils

OCDSB Procedure P.509.SCO – School Council Elections, Constitution and By-Laws

OCDSB Policy P.052.SCO – Fund-raising

OCDSB Procedure PR.540.SCO – Fund-raising

OCDSB Policy P.067.SCO – Volunteers

OCDSB Procedure PR.555.SCO – Volunteers

Ministry of Education: School Councils, A Guide for Members

Education Act, Ontario Regulation 612, School Councils