We provide a dynamic learning environment that engages and inspires students to achieve their personal best in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

School Council Induction
2016

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You can be a member of a responsible and effective School Council or through a successful Governance Partnership you can be a member of an Exceptional School Council
School Council Governance

The Department of Education and Training has a training program and support materials which assists councillors to understand their roles and responsibilities and develop the skills and knowledge to perform their governance tasks successfully.

“Improving School Governance” Governance module provides an understanding of:

• the framework within which school councils operate
• what school councils do
• school council operations
• important features of the school

Acting as a team, council supports the principal to provide the best possible educational outcomes for students

Resources
* School Policy and Advisory Guide - School Councils
* School Councils - Making the Partnership Work
* Other modules in the areas of: strategic planning, finance, policy development & review and School Council President
What is a school council?

- Each school council is a legal entity in its own right
- Is the major governing body of the school
- Plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes by endorsing the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents
- Is accountable to the Minister for Education in respect to how it fulfils its functions
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 legislation, Ministerial Orders, directions, guidelines and Department of Education and Training policy
Objectives of school council

Assist in the efficient governance of the school

Ensure students’ best interests are primary as the basis for its decisions

Enhance the educational opportunities for students

Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and regulations
Governance

• The Governance Institute of Australia defines governance, as "the way in which an organisation is steered and stewarded".

• Leadership Victoria Council has a Governance Philosophy that emphasises:
  - Strategic leadership rather than administrative detail.
  - Encouragement of diversity of opinions and views.
  - Collective rather than individual decisions.
  - Future rather than present focus.
  - A clear distinction between Council and CEO (Principal) roles.
Role of Principal and President

As executive officer of school council, the principal is responsible for:
• providing council with timely advice about educational and other matters
• preparing the council’s agenda in consultation with the president
• reporting regularly to council on the school’s performance against its strategic plan
• making sure that council decisions are acted upon
• providing adequate support and resources for the conduct of council meetings
• communicating with the school council president about council business

ensure that new council members receive appropriate induction

The role of the school council president is to:
• effectively chair school council meetings (ensure that at meetings everyone has a say, decisions are properly understood and well recorded)
• when votes are tied, have a second or casting vote
• be a signatory to contracts, the school strategic plan and financial accounts
• endorse the school review documents, annual implementation plan and annual report
• attest to school compliance with VRQA registration compliance
• preside at the annual public reporting meeting
• ensure council stays focused on improving student outcomes
• with the principal, be council’s spokesperson and official representative on public occasions.
Role and Focus of Exceptional School Councillors

Seeing the Council as being greater than the sum of the individual’s it comprises.

Adding value by focusing on the good for the overall situation, that is set aside your own special interests.

Offering strong support to the principal, president and the school in relation to Council business.

Thinking strategically with decisions and actions to support the future directions of the school and in the best interests of the students.

Attending school events, actively promoting the school and building trust in your community through good communication.

Complying with the code of conduct and Standing Orders.

Staying focused on Council objectives and functions, as distinct from the principal’s role and responsibilities.
Valuing all school council members

All school councillors need to respect other members’ opinions AND support and uphold all council decisions.

Frank and open discussions within meetings must be accompanied by confidentiality and privacy.

All councillors are expected to represent all members of the school community. Members are not there to represent just one viewpoint, or the view of an individual.

Parent members bring expertise and views to council on behalf of the whole school community.

DET 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.
What is the function of school council?

Establish broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community
Participate in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
Approve the annual budget and monitor expenditure
Develop, review and update school policies
Raise funds for school related purposes
Maintain the school’s grounds and facilities
Enter into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)
Report annually to the school community and to DET
Create interest in the school in the wider community
Aware of community perceptions
Regulate and facilitate after hours use of school premises and grounds
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
Contribution as School Council Members

**Expectations**
Be prepared for each meeting– reading
Arrive on time and stay to the end
Understand education speak (or ask) and financial literacy
Thoughtfully contribute to discussions
Ask constructive questions, build upon ideas, use humour
Listen with “a third ear”
Communicate through the Chair
Undertake regular professional learning (reading, online modules, mentoring)
**Respect the need for confidentiality and privacy**

**Engage your heart and mind**
Know your own style, observe the style of others and be flexible
Seek to add value and to empower others
School Council sub-committees and working parties

- Subcommittees are advisory bodies to the school council and assist council with work that needs to be done. They meet as directed by the council and report, in writing, to the council clearly indicating any recommendations or tabling a Record sheet for information.

- The whole council has the final responsibility for decisions and Exceptional School Council’s do not rework how recommendations were arrived at.
- If in doubt send material back with clarifying questions.

- The school council decides the purpose and terms of reference of a subcommittee and working parties.
Relationships

• Help each other be right......not wrong
• Look for ways to make new ideas work...Not why they won’t
• If in doubt...check it out!
• Help each other achieve and take pride in the collective achievements...celebrate progress
• Speak positively about your school council at every opportunity
• Maintain a positive mental attitude and remain calm
• Act with initiative and courage as if it all depends on you
• Be resilient and re-focus
• Do everything with enthusiasm....It’s contagious
TEAM

Together Everyone Achieves More
Top 10 Tips

1. Relate all school governance work to the school's vision
2. Be crystal-clear about the role, objectives, functions and legislative powers
3. Develop a workplan for policy, planning and reporting
4. Promote awareness of personal skills and ethical conduct
5. Develop timely access to relevant information and data
6. Plan in advance for building dialogue and managing conflict
7. Use a set of easy practices to make all meetings productive
8. Identify skills gaps and have a partnerships policy
9. Have a communication plan to engage the community
10. Build in routine reflection and improvement

Source: VICCSO
Other Resources

The Education State: Schools


http://www.acsso.org.au  Australian Council of State School Organisations

http://www.viccso.org.au  Victorian Council of School Organisations


Community Sector Governance Capability Framework: Tool Kit

http://www.leadershipvictoria.org

Board Leadership Programs

http://www.ourcommunity.com.au

Sample NfP policies, Grant information

http://www.companydirectors.com.au

Good Governance Principles and Guidance for Not-for-Profit Organisations