

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

Adopted March 21, 2005 (Revised April 26, 2006) (Revised June 2, 2007)

ARTICLE 1 Name of Organization

- 1.1 This organization will be St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council. Hereafter known as “the Council”.

ARTICLE II Mandates of the Council

- 2.1 Working within the mission statement and goals of Board Policy and regulations the Council will:
- i) provide opportunities for parents to be more involved in the education of their children
 - ii) develop a mission statement and annual goals for the school and evaluate its success in achieving goals
 - iii) advise and help develop a school profile
 - iv) provide advice to the Principal on the allocation of staff, school budgets, school operations and management
 - v) address the social environment of the school
 - vi) be a positive voice for Catholic education and foster good relations among parents, staff, local community, parish and related groups.
 - vii) communicate with and seek parental and community views about Council activities
 - viii) respond to referrals from the Board and report on activities if requested by the Board
 - ix) annual review of principal profile to aid the Board in selection and placement policy
 - x) fundraise in order to meet objectives
- 2.2 The Council will not have any of the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation for the Board, the Principal or collective agreements.

ARTICLE III Representation and Membership

- 3.1 The Council should be composed of a maximum of 20 members
- i) the Principal
 - ii) twelve elected parents/guardians of students in St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School
 - iii) one teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School
 - iv) one community representative
 - v) two student body representatives
 - vi) one parish member
 - vii) one non-teaching staff member
 - viii) one Ontario Association of parents in Catholic Education member

Council can operate with a minimum of 6 elected parents/guardians providing the elected parents/guardians are in the majority. (Regulation 612/00)

- 3.2 All parents/guardians of students enrolled in St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School are eligible to be elected to the Council.
- 3.3 At the first meeting of the new Council after the fall election, the members of the Council shall elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. The Chair and Vice-Chair cannot be an employee of the Board. As per Board policy the Chair must be Catholic and must hold the same qualifications as trustees elected to the School Board.

ARTICLE IV Terms of Office

- 4.1 Council members, except for the Principal, are elected or appointed annually. (Regulation 612/00)
- 4.2 The Principal is appointed by the school board.
- 4.3 The Council may establish committees made up of council members, teachers, parents, business leaders, parish representatives, and interested citizens. Committees carry out specific functions, to study specific issues and make recommendations to the Council. Council will seek widespread participation in these activities. Each committee must include one parent member of the Council.
- 4.4 These committees have no responsibilities beyond those outlined by the Council when establishing said committees. The Council Treasurer will be responsible for all monies earned by and/or necessary in the furthering the ways and means of said committees.

- 4.5 Membership on the Council will terminate when a member:
- i) ceases to hold the criteria for representing a constituency
 - ii) no longer has a child enrolled in the school (parent)
 - iii) no longer is employed at the school (employee)
 - iv) submits a letter of resignation to the chairperson
 - v) end of term (beginning of new school year)

ARTICLE V Council Procedure

- 5.1 All Council and committee meetings shall be open to council members, teachers, parents, business leaders, parish representatives, and interested citizens. A quorum of elected parents/guardians is necessary to hold a Council meeting. (Article 8.7)
- 5.2 Generally, the means of decision-making shall be through consensus. As compared to a democratic vote where most people support a decision, consensus would have all in attendance willing to accept a decision as reasonable. In the case where a consensus could not be reached a vote will then be taken. For the rules concerning the Chair's capacity to vote see Article 7.1.10. A quorum of elected parents/guardians is required for a vote. In the event that a quorum is not met the issue will be tabled to the next meeting.
- 5.3 The Council has the responsibility to regularly inform the general school and parent community of their activities, i.e. " Council Update". Minutes and agendas are to be displayed publicly for easy perusal.
- 5.4 An Annual Report must be prepared by the Council to be submitted to the Principal, Board and school community annually. The Annual Report will include a report of all Fundraising activities carried out by the Council.

ARTICLE VI Officers – Councils Members

- 6.1 All elected parents/guardians have voting privileges. All others as defined in Article 3.1 are advisors.

At the joint meeting in September the members of the Council shall, from its membership, elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. (Bylaw 1.1.1) The Chair and must be an elected parent member, Catholic and CDSBEO rate payer. The Vice Chair must be an elected parent members and CDSBEO rate payer. (Article 3.3)

The Chair of each ad-hoc committee if not an elected parent/guardian of the Council, shall serve as an advisor to the Council.

ARTICLE VII Duties of the Council Officers

- 7.1 The Chair of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council is responsible for:
- i) presiding at all meetings and providing leadership to the Council
 - ii) general supervision of Council activities
 - iii) working in cooperation with the Principal to prepare and distribute a written Council meeting agenda prior to each meeting
 - iv) in consultation with the Principal, appointing temporary and/or standing committees, as needed, and serving as an ex-officio member of all committees
 - v) expressing consensus as reached by the Council
 - vi) conducting a vote (when unable to come to a consensus) to determine the decision of the Council
 - vii) serving as spokesperson for the Council
 - viii) monitoring the implementation of Council decisions
 - ix) informing all School Council members of any items pertaining to St. Thomas Aquinas arising from Board minutes
 - x) does not vote on issues unless required to break a tie or by declaring to Council, before the vote, that he/she wishes to vote on a specific issue
- 7.2 The Vice-Chair of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council is responsible for:
- i) assisting the Chair as needed and exercising all functions of the Chair in the absence of the Chair
 - ii) maintaining and/or upholding the responsibilities of elected parents/guardians unable to perform their duties
 - iii) performing the duties of additional Officers as per Article 6.1, until their roles are defined and an elected Officer is in place
- 7.3 The Secretary of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council is responsible for:
- i) keeping a full and accurate account of all proceedings and transactions of all Council meetings
 - ii) providing a copy of the minutes to all council members prior to the monthly meetings
 - iii) maintaining a Council file in the school administrative office containing copies of all minutes, correspondence, current bylaws and reports
 - iv) maintaining an up to date Council membership list of addresses and telephone numbers; addresses and telephone numbers maybe circulated within the council upon approval of the Council member
 - v) preparing an Annual Report outlining the Council's goals, activities and achievements, including any fund-raising activities to be submitted to the Principal, Board, and parents/guardians of all pupils in the school, at the end of the term of the Council

- 7.4 The Principal of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School is responsible for:
- i) planning programs and providing materials to assist the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities
 - ii) assisting, advising, supporting, cooperating, and consulting with the Council
 - iii) acting as a resource on the Education Act and its regulations, ministry directives, laws, school policies, board policies, school profile, school improvement plans and other new initiatives at the school and board level
 - iv) providing administrative assistance to and clerical/secretarial support for Council activities
 - v) attending meetings or designating the Vice-Principal to attend meetings of the Council and publicizing its activities through newsletters, etc.
 - vi) cooperatively setting the agendas for the Council meetings
 - vii) maintaining the authority, responsibilities and obligations of principalship mandated by Board Policy, and the Acts and Regulations of the Province of Ontario
 - viii) sharing information on school activities, successes and concerns with the Council
 - ix) notifying the school community of the date, time, and location of the Council elections, at least fourteen days before the election date; and report the results to the Council election – the names of the members elected, no later than 30 days following an election
 - x) notifying the school community of the dates, times, and locations of all regular Council and committee meetings
 - xi) notifying the school community of the annual Council report
 - xii) reporting back on action taken or not taken in response to Council recommendations – explaining how recommendations have been considered or why recommendations were not acted on. (Regulation 298)
 - xiii) maintaining financial records of previous years for a period of seven years
- 7.5 The Treasurer of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council is responsible for:
- i) ensuring said funds be held in the bank account in the name of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council until disbursement details are finalized
 - ii) maintaining financial records for the current year and reporting on the status of finances at each Council meeting
 - iii) ensuring expenditures are made only with Council approval
 - iv) submitting to the Council, at the end of the Council term, all financial records and turning over financial records to the principal
 - v) ensuring that the signing authority will include the principal, the Chair and the Treasurer and will be updated within one month of the election of new officers
 - vi) in special circumstances an expenditure not exceeding \$100.00 may be made by the Treasurer in consultation with the Principal and the Chair

- 7.6 The Non-Teaching representative, the Parish representative, the Teacher representative, the Student Body representatives and the Business representative are responsible for being a liaison between the group they represent and the Council. Written or verbal reports will be given to the chair one week prior to the monthly meetings if possible, when there is an issue or concern that needs to be brought to the Council. It will be left up to the discretion of the representative to decide if a written report is needed or whether a verbal one is sufficient.

ARTICLE VIII Meetings

- 8.1 Although normal decision-making will be achieved by consensus, at times a formal ballot voting process may be required. Each elected parent/guardian will have one vote. Absentee ballots and/or proxies will not be permitted.
- 8.2 The council shall meet once a month on a scheduled date. The Council shall attempt to meet at least nine times each school year. The Council will decide at the first meeting of the new Council which day of the month the meeting is to be held.
- 8.3 Matters of procedure for all meetings will follow “Roberts Rules of Order”.
- 8.4 Non-Scheduled meetings of the council may be held providing proper notice of the time and date has been circulated to all members, parents and staff.
- 8.5 The Principal or designated Vice-Principal must attend all meetings.
- 8.6 A simple majority of the elected Parent Council members shall constitute a quorum. A meeting of the Council cannot be held unless a quorum is achieved.
- 8.7 In cases when urgent Council decisions are required between scheduled meetings, when deemed warranted by the Principal or the Chair, an email or telephone consensus or vote on a question or issue may be conducted provided that a maximum number of members are reached. The reason and results of the email or telephone poll shall be presented at the next scheduled meeting of the council. In the event that one voting member opposes the email or telephone consensus, an emergency Council meeting will be called to debate the issue.
- 8.8 Requests to address the Council are to be given to the Chair prior to the scheduled meeting. Unscheduled items may be tabled to the next meeting at the discretion of the Council.
- 8.9 Council will operate in a manner that is non-judgmental, is based on no-fault discussion, and uses consensus and compromise as the usual method for developing recommendations and/or plans.

ARTICLE IX Fundraising

- 9.1 Prior to public announcement and formal planning, the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council must approve all council fundraising.
- 9.2 Funds received are for the sole purpose of bettering the education experience of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School students and said funds will be held in the bank account of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School Council until disbursement details are finalized.
- 9.3 Monies and financial records pertaining to said monies, received from school-based fundraisers, will be given to the Council Treasurer to be managed.
- 9.4 All fundraising activities conducted by the Council must be included in the Annual Report.

BYLAWS

BYLAW # 1 Elections and Appointment Procedures

- 1.1.1 Elections will take place within the first 30 days of the start of the school year. The present Council and the school Principal organize elections, with elected/acclaimed officials beginning their term following the joint meeting of the old and new Councils.
- 1.1.2 Each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school shall be entitled to one vote for each vacant parent/guardian membership position on the Council.

The Council will appoint an Election Committee. To avoid conflict of interest no one standing for election, or the spouse of anyone standing for election, shall be a member of the Election Committee or operate the voting stations.

- 1.1.3 Parent Representatives will be elected/acclaimed according to the following process:
 - i) information about the upcoming election of parent/guardian representatives, along with a nomination ballot, will be distributed in the newsletter.
 - ii) parents/guardians of students who are newly registered from other schools will be provided with the nomination form from the guidance office with registration package.

- iii) the Council will accept a 75-word (maximum) profile sheet from each nominee due two weeks before the scheduled election date if one is necessary. If an election is required: nominee profiles, along with an election ballot, will be published in the school newsletter and sent to parents of every student enrolled in the school.
 - iv) ballots will be returned to the school within seven days. Voting can occur in person or by delivering the ballot with student. Proxy votes will be permissible but sent to the Principal in a sealed envelope. The Principal will process the vote confidentially. All ballots will be counted and verified by the Principal and two scrutineers. The two scrutineers cannot be nominees or present Council members. The Principal and the two scrutineers will destroy ballots at the direction of the Council. Voting will be one day only – from 8 am to 8 p.m.
 - v) seats may be acclaimed upon singular nomination.
 - vi) names of the new members are publicized to the school community within 30 days of the election.
- 1.1.4 If any Council positions become vacant, the remaining members shall constitute the Council, unless the parent/guardian majority is not maintained. If the parent majority on the Council is not maintained, the vacancy may be filled by election or by appointment. If an election is to take place to fill a vacancy the election process set out in Bylaw 1.1.3 will apply.
- 1.1.5 The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School teaching staff will elect teacher representatives annually during a regularly scheduled staff meeting in September.
- Seats may be acclaimed upon singular nomination
- 1.1.6 Non-teaching staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School elects non-Teaching staff representatives annually in September.
- Seats may be acclaimed upon singular nomination
- 1.1.7 Parish Representative will be recommended by parish pastor(s), and appointed by the Parish Priest in September.
- 1.1.8 The St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School student body elects student body representatives annually in September.
- 1.1.9 Community Representatives must be English Catholic School Supporters. The Community Representative will be selected and appointed by the elected members on a geographical rotational basis.
- 1.1.10 The names of all Council members will be published in the school newsletter.

- 1.1.11 The names and addresses of all Council members will be forwarded to the superintendent at the board office.

BYLAW # 2 Bylaw and Article Changes

- 2.1.1 If listed on the current meeting's agenda, Bylaws and Articles may be amended at any regular scheduled meeting of the Council by a vote of elected parent members. This is provided that advance notice is given to the stakeholders; that is, specific amendments have been introduced at a previous meeting or published in a newsletter.
- 2.1.2 A majority of elected parent members is required for any modifications to bylaws and articles.

BYLAW # 3 Conflict of Interest

- 3.1.1 Conflict of interest occurs in any situation in which an individual's private interests may be incompatible or in conflict with his/her Council responsibilities. Conflict of interest may be actual, perceived, or potential. Anytime the Council does business with a particular person, agency, or company, and a member of the Council has a vested interest with that person, agency, or company; that member shall declare a conflict of interest immediately, and decline from the discussion and voting.

BYLAW # 4 Constitution Availability

- 4.1.1 A copy of the constitution will be available to all families, teachers, and staff of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School upon their request.
- 4.1.2 A copy of the constitution will be posted in the school office.

BYLAW # 5 Conflict Resolution

- 5.1.1 Every school council member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concern or opinion about the issue at dispute and how the dispute has affected him or her.
- 5.1.2 Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times.
- 5.1.3 The Chair's responsibility is to clarify statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised, and to set out the joint interests of all members.

- 5.1.4 If no common ground can be identified, the chair will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further.
- 5.1.5 If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, the chair shall request the intervention of a superintendent or other senior administrator to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.