Introduction to School Council: an induction program

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1. Legal Framework

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What is a school council?

- Is a legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school

- Is the major governing body of the school

- Plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes

- Endorses the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents

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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 legislated powers, Ministerial Orders, guidelines, directions and DEECD policy

Objectives of school council

- Assist in the efficient governance of the school

- Ensure students' best interests are primary

- Enhance the educational opportunities for students

- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, Ministerial Orders or a direction, guideline or policy

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What is the function of school council?

- Establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community

- Participate in the development and monitoring of the School Strategic Plan

- Develop, review and update school policies

- Raise funds for school-related purposes

- Approve the annual budget and monitor expenditure

- Maintain the school's grounds and facilities

- Enter into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)

- Report annually to the school community and to DEECD

- Generally stimulate interest in the school in the wider community

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School council does <u>not</u>…

- 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

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Council (governance)	Principal (operations)
• Approves the annual budget and monitors expenditure	• Develops and monitors the school strategic plan
• Participates in the development of the School Strategic Plan and monitors progress against the goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the Plan	• Leads the development of the annual budget
• Ensures that proper accounts and records are kept of the school's financial operations	• Is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school
• Ensures internal controls are maintained and monitored	• Authorises investments
• Ensures that all money coming into the hands of the school is expended for proper purposes relating to the school	

Council (governance)	**Principal** (operations)
• Broad curriculum involvement in line with DEECD policy • Develops, reviews and updates policies	• Leads curriculum development and implementation Staff performance and development • Implements policies endorsed by school council • Manages all matters of student welfare, discipline and academic progress

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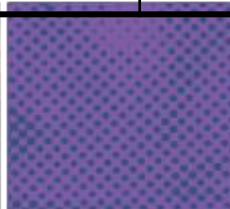
Further examples

Council (governance)	Principal (operations)
• Approves employment of some staff • Recommends re Principal selection • Promotes the school to the wider community	• Employs teaching staff • Manages staff performance and development • Represents DEECD to the wider community

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Planning, reporting & accountability

- School Strategic Plan

- School budget / finances

- Annual Report to the School Community

- Legal liability

What is strategic planning & why do it?

- Strategy, properly formulated, should provide the central point around which a school community can **focus** and **unite** to ensure that every child at the school can get the best possible education.

- A strategic plan is your school's **voice.**

What outcomes are we trying to achieve?

- Student learning e.g. reading, writing, maths

- Student engagement and wellbeing e.g. attendance, positive relationships, safety

- Student pathways and transition into, through and between schools

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Key questions for school council

- What outcomes is the school trying to achieve for our students?

- Where are we now?

- What does the school need to do?

- How will the school manage its resources to achieve these outcomes?

- How will we know if these outcomes have been achieved?

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School budget / finance

School council must ensure that:

- An annual budget is developed and approved

- Proper accounts and records are kept

- Internal controls are maintained and monitored

- All money coming into the school is expended for proper purposes relating to the school

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What is an annual budget?

- The financial plan that makes sure that the school's resources (people, programs, services, equipment etc) support its educational priorities and objectives

- Shows how the school will use these resources to produce the results aimed for in the strategic plan, and

- Shows how the school will maximise student outcomes through the most efficient and effective use of its resources

How is the annual budget created?

- The School Strategic Plan is used as a starting point to determine the strategies to be funded

- Program leaders work out what they need to do, and the funds that will be required

- This is balanced against estimates of the total funds available

- The finance committee produces its recommended plan and submits it to council for approval

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What should council do regularly?

- Keep informed about its financial position by carefully considering the financial reports provided at monthly meetings

- Monitor budget income targets against what has been collected

- "ensure that all money coming into the hands of the council is expended for proper purposes relating to the school" *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*

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Other finance responsibilities …

School council should:

- Monitor school accounts to decide if there are opportunities to invest surplus funds to earn interest income

- Minimise risk by creating and approving an annual investment policy

    … e.g. using the High Yield Investment Account

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Annual reporting to the school community

- The Annual Report to the School Community

- Endorsed by council before 31 March each year

- Requirement of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*

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Legal liability

- School councillors are indemnified against "any liability in respect of any loss or damage suffered by the council or any other person in respect of anything necessarily or reasonably done, or omitted to be done, by the member in good faith:

    - In the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a member, or

    - In the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of the member."

    (s2.3.32 Education and Training Reform Act 2006)
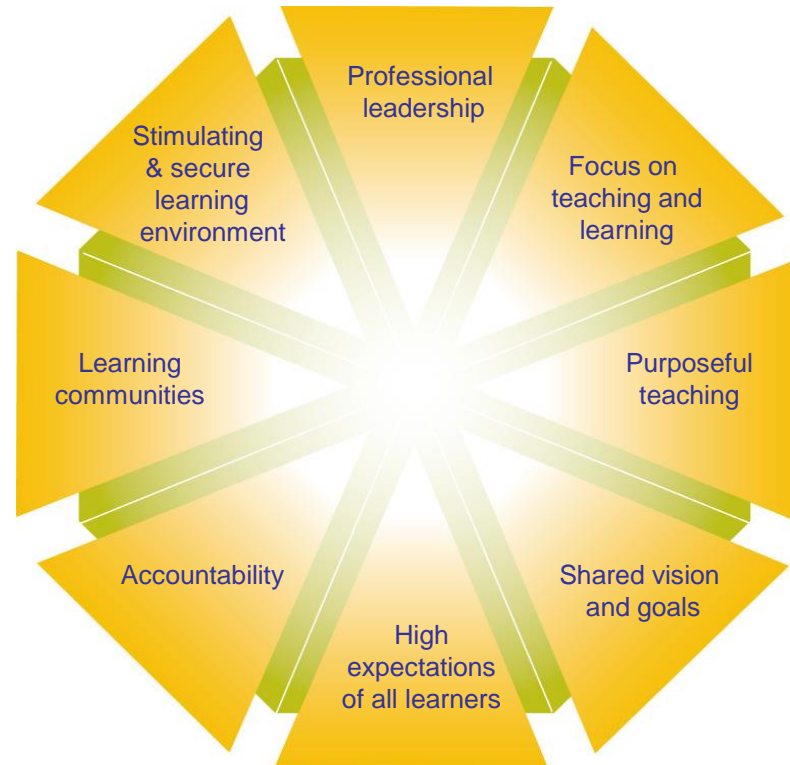
2. Governance

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"Good governance is a foundation for high performance and improved learning outcomes for all students."

Making the Partnership Work, p6

Effective schools model

Professional leadership

Focus on teaching and learning

Stimulating & secure learning environment

Purposeful teaching

Learning communities

Shared vision and goals

Accountability

High expectations of all learners

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Characteristics of an effective school council

- Focuses on improving student learning

- Leads conversations about key issues and challenges

- Is actively involved in developing the School Strategic Plan

- Promotes meaningful family and community participation

- Has diversity in membership

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Characteristics of an effective school council (continued)

- Has a clear understanding of its role and responsibilities

- Has clear decision-making processes

- Maintains high ethical standards

- Has members who have developed mutual trust and respect

- Evaluates and communicates with school community about its activities

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Key partnerships

- Principal and school council president

- President and subcommittee convenors

- Council members

- Staff and parents and school council

- School council and DEECD

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School council processes

- In supporting the development of the School Strategic Plan and school policies, school council should aim to fully consult with the school's community

- Council should schedule all policies for review on a regular basis

- A set of standing orders should be developed and implemented by council

  - This may include a Code of Conduct or protocols for school councillors

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School council processes (continued)

- Council should determine processes for receiving data on a regular basis to enable monitoring against the school's Annual Implementation Plan and to assist in progressively developing the school's annual report

- Sub-committees need to be established to make recommendations to school council and to ensure the wider school community can be involved in the discussion of issues

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School Council Code of Conduct

- Honest, fair, impartial with integrity

- Good faith and best interest of the school

- Use information and position appropriately

- Financially responsible

- Care, diligence, skills and compliance with legislation

- Leadership and stewardship

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3. Operations

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Who is on school council?

- There are three categories of membership:

  - Parent members

  - DEECD employee members

  - Community (co-opted) members (optional)

- School councillors are elected for a two-year term

- Terms, rights and responsibilities of community members are the same as those of elected councillors

School Council Meetings

- Frequency

- Length

- Quorum

- Effective decision-making

- Open versus closed meetings

- Tied votes

- Standing orders

- Conflict of interest

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Role of president

- Chairs all school council meetings

- With the principal, acts as school council spokesperson and official representative

- Upholds all council decisions and works in partnership with the principal

- Ensures council stays focused on improving student outcomes

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Role of principal

- The overall educational leader and manager of the school

- Establishes and manages the school financial system

- Executive officer of school council

- Accountable for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the School Strategic Plan

- The senior DEECD representative for the school

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Role of school council members

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

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

- DEECD 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

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Role of subcommittees

- Assist the work of school council and report regularly, provide advice and make recommendations to council, which has the final responsibility for decisions

- Provide opportunities to involve and utilise the expertise of members of the school community who are not members of school council

- It is recommended that all school councils have a finance subcommittee

- Short term issues are usually considered by a working party

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Examples of subcommittees

- Environment/grounds/facilities/buildings

- Educational policy

- Community liaison/community building/community relations

- Outside school hours care

- Canteen

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4. Support

Professional development available for school councilors

- Online professional development packages and information sheets

- Regional workshops and seminars

- Professional development provided by peak school council organisations (e.g. VICCSO, ASCIV)

- State Services Authority

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For more information

- http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/schoolcouncils

- http://www.asciv.org.au Association of School Councils in Victoria (ASCIV)

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

- http://.www.ssa.vic.gov.au State Services Authority (SSA)

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