

# Elk Island Public Schools Committee of School Councils Operating Procedures

## 1. DEFINITIONS

In these Operating Procedures:

- a) **"EIPS"** means Elk Island Public Schools;
- b) **"COSC"** means the Committee of School Councils;
- c) **"School Council Member"** means any individual from a school council who attends COSC meetings. Multiple members from a single school council may attend COSC meetings.
- d) **"Voting Member"** means a member designated by their respective school council to cast votes on behalf of that council during COSC meetings. If multiple members from the same school council are present, the school council must decide amongst themselves who will serve as the voting member.
- e) **"EIPS Representative"** means individuals appointed by Elk Island Public Schools to participate in COSC meetings, providing information and insights from the Division. This includes Board Trustees, the Superintendent, Associate Superintendents, the Secretary-Treasurer, Directors, and other EIPS employees.
- f) **"COSC Member"** means any individual who participates in the COSC as outlined in **Section 5, Membership and Roles**.
- g) **"Parents"** means parent, guardian or primary caregiver of any child enrolled in an educational program in EIPS; and
- h) **"Operating Procedures"** means the governing document serving the same purpose as Bylaws referenced in the Regulations.

## 2. HISTORY AND AUTHORITY

Strathcona County Committee of School Advisory Councils (COSAC) formed in the late 1980s under Strathcona County Public Schools to bring together partners in education. As the group evolved, ownership transferred to parents who held the executive positions. When amalgamation occurred in 1993, Strathcona County Schools became part of Elk Island Public Schools. School Councils also became mandated under the *School Act* in 1995, currently known as the *Education Act*, and COSAC became the EIPS COSC. COSC was the first group of this nature in Alberta and has been a model for other divisions.

COSC operates with autonomy and is supported by Board Policy 2, (insert link). **which states:**

**2.3 The Board shall encourage the formation of a Committee of School Councils (COSC).**

**2.3.1. If a COSC is formed, its primary purpose shall be to enhance communication among the school councils, the Board, the Superintendent and the community.**

**2.3.2. School personnel or individual student concerns shall not be discussed at COSC meetings. Parents and guardians with concerns are encouraged to present their concerns directly to the teacher or Principal.**

**2.3.3. Further terms of reference and operating procedures shall be as determined by COSC.**

## 3. PURPOSE

COSC exists for the purpose of empowering, engaging and supporting school council members.

## 4. OBJECTIVES


- Receive timely presentations by EIPS Representatives and education partners on provincial and Division education initiatives.
- Share best practices and perspectives from school councils throughout the Division.

# Summary of Comments on COSC\_OperatingProcedures\_April2025.pdf


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 Number: 1 Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

I added one additional definition - COSC Member. This term is used throughout the operating procedures and just wanted to ensure it was defined.

 Number: 2 Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

It was brought to my attention that we are at risk of having to open the operating procedures every time the board changes the language of a policy. To ensure we are always up-to-date with language, I propose we remove the exact language quoted from the board policy and replace it with a link to the policy.

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- Understand our legislated role as school councils and how parents can make an impact provincially.
- Understand the role of fundraising societies.
- Support and empower school council members through support and mentorship opportunities.
- Create opportunities for meaningful discussion which can then inform discussion at the school level.
- Build relationships with other school council members and education partners.
- Understand Division priorities, goals and outcomes, and their role in the EIPS Four-Year Education Plan and School Education Plans.
- Share content from individual school councils.
- Foster the collaborative spirit of Parents as Partners.
- Broaden perspectives to include the full K-12 educational experience.
- Encourage participation in and understanding of the role of the Alberta School Councils' Association.
- Resource and equip healthy school councils and fundraising societies.

## 5. MEMBERSHIP and ROLES

The COSC encourages active engagement from all COSC members, ensuring that participation aligns with the committee's established purpose and objectives.

The membership shall consist of:

- a) School council member(s) as defined in 1(c)
- b) The Superintendent and/or designate
- c) EIPS COSC liaison
- d) ATA Local President and/or designate
- e) Board of Trustee Chair and/or designate(s)
- f) Additional Trustee(s)
- g) Other invited guests
- h) Past Chair (for a term of one year)

The roles of each member within COSC are as follows:

### a) School Council Members

- Act as liaisons between their respective school councils and COSC, ensuring effective communication and representation of their school's perspectives.
- Participate in monthly COSC meetings to discuss educational issues, share best practices, and collaborate on initiatives that benefit all schools within EIPS.


### b) Superintendent and/or Designate

- Provide division-wide updates, insights into administrative decisions, and information on educational initiatives and policies through the Superintendent's report and/or presentations.
- Address questions and concerns raised by school council members, facilitating a transparent flow of information between EIPS administration and school communities.

### c) EIPS COSC Liaison

- Acts as vital support to the COSC Executive in their responsibilities, helping to facilitate its execution of tasks as required. The COSC Executive will remain accountable to fulfilling responsibilities as outlined in their role.

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 Number: 1      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

I made two changes to this section. Under the old operating procedures, decision making was a sub-heading under Governance, Membership, and Decision Making.

As per last meetings discussion, I added the defined roles for each COSC Member.

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- Collaborates with the COSC Chair to develop meeting agendas that reflect the COSC's priorities and objectives.
- Assists in the distribution of meeting materials, such as agendas, minutes, follow-up emails, and notices, as determined by COSC, to facilitate effective communication among members.
- Works with the COSC Secretary to maintain accurate records of meetings and member information

### **d) ATA Local President and/or Designate**

- Represent the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) by offering perspectives on provincial educational developments, including policy changes and ATA initiatives.

### **e) Board of Trustees Chair and/or Designate(s)**

- Represent the EIPS Board of Trustees, providing updates on board decisions, policies, and strategic directions through the Board Chair report.
- Engage with school council members to understand community perspectives and incorporate them into board considerations.

### **f) Additional Trustee(s)**

- Support the Board Chair in representing the Board of Trustees within COSC.
- Participate in discussions, offer insights, and assist in conveying board initiatives and decisions to school councils.

### **g) Other Invited Guests**

- Attend COSC meetings to provide information on specific topics, present on initiatives, or offer expertise that benefits school council members.

### **h) Past Chair (for a term of one year)**

- Serve in an advisory capacity to the current Chair and COSC, offering historical context and guidance based on previous experience.
- Assist in ensuring continuity and supporting the transition of leadership within the committee.

## **6. DECISION MAKING**

Most decisions shall be made by consensus by school council Voting Members, as defined in section 1(d).


Decisions requiring a vote would be items such as motions, elections, dissolution, or updating operational procedures.

Each attending school council shall be granted one vote, by their designated voting member. If the designated voting member is unable to attend a COSC meeting, the school council may appoint an alternate school council member to assume voting responsibilities for that meeting. This alternate voting member should be selected by the school council in advance of the COSC meeting and that member must be prepared to participate fully in discussions and decision-making processes.

Voting members must be present to vote. Proxy votes will not be counted.

Votes shall be simple majority, except for dissolution, which shall require 75 percent approval.

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 Number: 1      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

For Decision Making as it's own section, I added here the process for if the selected voting member cannot attend a COSC meeting that requires a vote - operational meeting for example. I also added that voting members must be present to vote, and proxy votes will not be counted.

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## 7. QUORUM

COSC does not have quorum requirements.

## 8. EXECUTIVE and TERMS OF OFFICE

The Term of Office shall be one year beginning at the October meeting.

The positions of the Executive shall consist of: Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary

- a) All Executive positions must be filled by a School Council Member as defined in 1(c) above.
- b) Every School Council Member is eligible to be elected to a COSC Executive position.
- c) Any Executive member may resign their position by providing written notice to the other executive members.
- d) Any Executive member may be removed from the Executive at any time with cause by a majority vote cast by voting members at a regularly scheduled COSC meeting.
- e) The Executive will carry out the day-to-day operation of the COSC.

## 9. DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

### A. Chair

The COSC Chair will be a school council member as described in 1 (c). Unless otherwise delegated, the COSC Chair will:

- a) Prepare materials and chair all meetings of the COSC. In the event the Chair<sup>1</sup> is unable to attend a meeting, they must ensure that all prepared materials are handed off to the Vice-Chair in advance, enabling the Vice-Chair to effectively chair the meeting.
- b) Coordinate with the EIPS liaison to establish meeting agendas;
- c) Decide all matters relating to rules of order at the meetings;
- d) Ensure that COSC Operating Procedures are current and followed;
- e) Be the official spokesperson of the COSC;
- f) Ensure that there is regular communication with the whole COSC community;
- g) Review any communication to the COSC community prior to distribution; and
- h) Have general responsibility for all activities of COSC.

It is expected that the COSC chair will chair each meeting. If, without just cause, the Chair is unable to attend 80 percent of the meetings (5) or misses more than 2 consecutive meetings, the role<sup>2</sup> will become vacant, and an election will be held at the next meeting.

### B. Vice-Chair


Unless otherwise delegated, the Vice-Chair of COSC will:

- a) In the event of resignation, incapacity or leave of absence of the Chair, fulfill the Chair's responsibilities;
- b) In the absence of the Chair, supervise the affairs and preside at any meetings of COSC;
- c) Work with and support the Chair in agenda preparation;
- d) Promote teamwork and assist the Chair in the smooth running of the meetings; and
- e) Assist the Chair and undertake tasks assigned by the Chair.

### C. Secretary

Unless otherwise delegated, the Secretary of COSC will:

- a) Act as a recorder at each meeting and ensure that the minutes are prepared accurately to reflect the directions agreed to at the meeting;

 Number: 1      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

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I added some additional context to what is required of the Chair when preparing for meeting. Also, that it is responsibility of the chair to hand off all prepared materials to the Vice Chair in the event they cannot chair the meeting.

 Number: 2      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen

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This is the clause we asked for additional thought and discussion. This clause was proposed to ensure the person who is elected into the role of chair understands the commitment but also ensures that COSC members do not have make the decision to remove the chair from the role in the event they cannot fulfill their role. This clause quantifies how many meetings the chair needs to be present for.



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- b) Work together with the EIPS liaison to maintain a dated record of all meetings and members of COSC and their information, in compliance with PIPA; and
- c) Work together with the EIPS liaison to distribute, as determined by COSC, agendas, minutes, notices of meetings and notices of other events.

In the absence of the Secretary, COSC shall choose a recording Secretary for the meeting.

## 10. VACANCIES

Elections for a vacant position will be held at subsequent meetings of COSC until the vacancy is filled.

## 11. MEETINGS

A minimum of 7 scheduled regular meetings will be held per school year or as called by the Executive. It will be decided when these meetings will take place at the October meeting. The meetings will take place in the EIPS Board Room or at an alternate location as decided by the members or the Executive. To ensure accessibility for all school council members, meetings will also be made available virtually. The virtual meeting link will be shared when the COSC meeting package is distributed. In the event of inclement weather, the meeting will move strictly to virtual. This will be communicated to school council members via email on the day of the scheduled meeting.

## 12. MEETING AGENDAS

The Chair will work in partnership with the EIPS liaison to create the agendas for all meetings. Agenda item requests must be made through the Chair, who will, if necessary, consult with the Executive as to the appropriateness of the item requested.

## 13. COMMITTEES


COSC may appoint committees to focus on specific collaborative initiatives that align with COSC's objectives and require dedicated attention beyond regular meetings.

- Committees can consist of school council members and other appropriate community partners. Tasks and responsibilities are to be performed exclusively by the committee members, working collaboratively to ensure alignment with COSC's objectives and to enhance parent engagement within EIPS.
- Updates on activities and progress can be reported on during COSC meetings. These updates can also be communicated through the EIPS Liaison, who facilitates the sharing of information during regular COSC communications.


## 14. CODE OF CONDUCT

All COSC Members shall:

- A. Be guided by the purpose and objectives of COSC;
- B. Act within the intent of the COSC Operating Procedures and EIPS Board Policies and Administrative Procedures. Practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth;
- C. Recognize and respect the personal integrity of each COSC member;
- D. Declare any conflict of interest;
- E. Encourage a positive atmosphere in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued;
- F. Apply democratic principles;
- G. Consider the best interests of all students;

 Number: 1      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen  
This was the addition to account for virtual meetings.

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 Number: 2      Author: Michelle Uytterhagen  
This section was updated just to define that the work of COSC committees needs to be done by COSC members and that the EIPS Liaison is there to support the COSC members through communication only.

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- H. Use the appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise; and
- I. Practice respectful meeting etiquette (as specified on the back of the meeting nameplates).

15. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

COSC shall abide by the Conflict Resolution Procedures outlined:

- a) If at any time 75% of the school council members attending the prior month’s meeting are of the opinion that COSC is in a state of conflict such that its operation is significantly impaired, they may deliver a signed statement of conflict to all Executive Members and the statement of conflict shall be added to the agenda of the next meeting.
  - All COSC members present will have an opportunity to hear and discuss the issues causing conflict.
  - On motion, a vote shall be taken respecting a proposed resolution to the conflict.
  - If the majority of voting Members present vote in favour of the resolution proposed, the COSC will immediately act upon it.
- b) Interpersonal conflict shall not be addressed in the public meeting, but rather, privately between the parties involved. Informal and collegial resolution of problems is the preferred approach.

16. PRIVACY

COSC shall adhere to the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) and shall not use or share personal information for purposes other than those of COSC business.

17. DISSOLUTION

If due to legislation, COSC becomes redundant or loses its autonomy, COSC may choose to dissolve with a minimum 75% approval of voting members.

18. REVIEWS and AMENDMENTS

COSC may make any changes to these Operating Procedures deemed necessary to carry out its functions.

These Operating Procedures have been accepted by a majority of the Voting Members entitled to vote at a regularly scheduled COSC meeting of the School Councils.

_____ Chair Name	_____ Chair Signature	_____ Date
_____ Vice Chair Name	_____ Vice Chair Signature	_____ Date
_____ Secretary Name	_____ Secretary Signature	_____ Date