

Succession planning for school council members, chair and principal

Essentially, succession planning is about preparing for changes in school council membership and school leadership (chair and deputy chair), thus ensuring that the community remains confident in the governance and management of the school; that there is continuity of business and corporate knowledge, and, that the school council continues to operate with optimum effectiveness.

Who will be appointed chair when you finish at the end of the year?

We have three vacancies on our board, how will we fill them?

What skills and attributes do we need in the new council members?

What if our principal accepts an appointment elsewhere?

Some suggested activities for inclusion in succession planning processes include:

1. Monitoring the school council membership profile every year – who will be retiring from the school council?
2. To have at the ready during recruitment processes clear position descriptions in place for school principal, school council member, chair, and deputy chair
3. Perhaps use council committee membership as a discernment opportunity for school council membership
4. To guide the selection process, ensure the school council is covered by a policy on membership diversity, acknowledging the value-add of maintaining a balance of gender, culture, profession, age, etc
5. Advertise school council vacancies in the school newsletters, local congregations, or the wider media
6. Personally invite prospective school council members into a conversation
7. Ensure that time is set aside on the school council's annual forward agenda to discuss and action succession planning activities
8. Given that the principal has a broad knowledge of the school community, seek the views of the principal re potential school council members
9. Appoint a chair-elect at the start of the incumbent's final year in office. This will support a smooth transition
10. Regularly update principal's position description
11. Reflect on attributes and skills required to lead the school's vision
12. Consider scenarios for unexpected departure of principal