

DRAFT  
ONLY  
August 2001

**To: School Council Chairs**  
**From: Gary Sadler**  
**Re: Report of the “School Council Steering Committee”**

### **Background**

Last April, an invitation was extended to all School Councils to participate in a “Brain Storming” session to examine the needs of School Councils and to consider the potential of a regional “Umbrella Group” structure for School Councils in Halton. About 30 people participated in the session that included parent council members, trustees, and administrative staff. There were a number of needs identified and discussed. Although there was much commonality with respect to the needs identified it became clear that there was no consensus with respect to the means by which these needs could be met. It was agreed that a “Steering Committee” would be convened to continue the dialogue respecting needs and alternative means.

The Steering Committee consisted of three parent representatives (two elementary and one secondary) from each of three “areas” of the board, east, west and north, a Trustee, and me as Chair. Assistant Superintendent Suzanne Earle assisted me in the organization and management of this initiative.

The following is the report resulting from the work of the Steering Committee. School Councils are invited to forward their thoughts and comment regarding this report to Gary Sadler early in this new school year.

## **Report of the School Council Steering Committee–June 2001**

### **1.0 Goals of the Steering Committee**

- 1.1 To consider the potential of a Regional School Council organization (Umbrella Group) in Halton.
- 1.2 To identify the needs and concerns of School Councils in Halton and make recommendations to address these.

### **2.0 Discussion of “Identified Needs”**

- **Communication**
  - on line message board
  - e-mail web for disseminating information
  - school council web site
  - develop strategy for including members with limited computer access or skills
- **Consistency**
  - shared common material
  - shared messages and understandings
  - sharing of best practices
  - support from Board
- **Timely Consultation**
  - response time for Board/District initiatives

- Focus on student achievement
  - at the individual school level
  - the family of schools level
  - the board level
  
- Consultation at the individual school level
  - by the board
  - by the Ontario Parent Council
  - by the Ministry of Education and any other government ad hoc or standing educational commission or task force
  
- Training
  - in-service
  - facilitation
  - orientation and role clarification

### **3.0 Summary of Alternative Organizations Discussed**

- 3.1 Model One – Administrative Facilitator
  - Formation of temporary committees (using existing family of schools structure) to fulfil specific mandates (i.e. communication process).
  - Explore appointment of a “facilitator” at Board level to support and coordinate Council activities.
- 3.2 Model Two – School Council Umbrella Group
- 3.3 Model Three – Hybrid of Family of Schools Network / Admin Facilitator

### **4.0 Discussion of “Identified Concerns” and “Pro’s and Con’s”**

- that a school council umbrella group might evolve into a “political” organization or a “shadow board” that might diminish the role of the trustee.
- that a school council group might be used to short-cut the consultation process
- that members of a school council umbrella group would not be accountable to the communities that they could be asked to represent
- that without an umbrella group, representatives chosen by the administration might more closely reflect the views of the administration than the parent community
- that there has been no process for accountability on the part of the Board or the selected representatives of the parent community to consult or provide feedback to the parent community regarding any consultations at the regional or provincial level
- that the trustees and administration (without an umbrella group) will not address the “Identified Needs”
- that providing yet another level of commitment will further reduce parents’ interest in participating on school councils

### **5.0 Recommended Next Steps**

The Steering Committee does not recommend the formation of a Regional School Council Organization at this time. However, the committee does recommend the following next steps be taken and reviewed in a timely manner:

- 5.1 Encourage School Councils to meet by area, ideally with trustee participation.
  - Gary and Kelly to follow -up
  
- 5.2 Develop and implement a communication plan.
  - e-mail Councils asking for volunteers to sit on short term committee
  - Gary to strike committee for late September
  - recommend the involvement of Marnie Denton – Communication Officer
  
- 5.3 Develop an Orientation/Training plan for School Council members.
  - review handbook
  - plan annual Conference
  - Gary to e-mail Councils seeking volunteers for short term committee (fall)
  
- 5.4 Develop Resource Bank/Data Base for Councils.
  - Gary and Marnie Denton (Communications Officer)
  
- 5.5 Explore the Appointment of School Council Facilitator.
  - Gary and Administrative Council

**Thank you to all who have provided input into and support for this committee!**