

## Call for Participation in the 2024 School Governing Body Elections

School governance in South Africa is quite unique in that parents have a legal say in the education of their children more than in most countries of the world.

The foundation for this unique state of affairs was already laid in 1995 in White Paper 1 on the new education system. On page 21 of the White Paper appears the following fundamental principle regarding parental involvement in the education of our children:

*“Parents or guardians have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and have the right to be consulted by the state authorities with respect to the form that education should take and to take part in its governance. Parents have an inalienable right to choose the form of education which is best for their children, particularly in the early years of schooling, whether provided by the state or not, subject to reasonable safeguards which may be required by law. The parents' right to choose includes choice of the language, cultural or religious basis of the child's education, with due regard for the rights of others and the rights of choice of the growing child.”*

This principle was eventually incorporated into the South African Schools Act. Governing bodies of public schools are constituted under this law in such a way that parents on the governing body must always be in the majority. In this way, parents have a substantial say in the affairs of the school. The governing body ultimately determines the ethos, policy and general direction of the school. It is a very responsible task that requires expertise, commitment and enthusiasm.

The Schools Act also stipulates that governing bodies' term is limited to three years, but the members can be re-elected, provided of course that they are still parents of learners in the school. FEDSAS succeeded in convincing the Department of Education that these elections should be held nationwide in the same period. Before, each province decided itself when the elections should be held in that province and this gave rise to a lot of confusion.

In 2024, the elections will be taking place in March. Numerically, this is the biggest election in the country with around 300,000 people to be elected to governing bodies - most of them, of course, parents.

In order to have a legal election, the **election regulations prescribe** that **at least 15%** of the **school's parents must vote** during such an election. If the quorum is not achieved, the election is postponed and no quorum requirement applies to the postponed election. FEDSAS already has resources available to schools on our website to ensure that the election process runs legitimately.<sup>1</sup>

It has already happened at schools that the quorum requirement is not achieved and that a small group of parents organize themselves in such a way that they then get themselves elected to the governing body in the postponed election. This gives them the opportunity to change the total ethos, culture or direction of the school. This has had catastrophic consequences for those schools because political or other agendas that have nothing to do with the quality of education of children then prevail.

FEDSAS makes a serious appeal to parents who have the best interests of their children and of their children's school and education at heart, to put themselves up for election this year as members of governing bodies. Parents must also vote in large numbers so that the quorum requirement can be achieved, and the best available candidates are elected to their schools' governing bodies.

### **FEDSAS Support and Legal Services**

**2023**

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<sup>1</sup> See under "Public Schools" – Useful Information – SGB Elections 2024 on [www.fedsas.org.za](http://www.fedsas.org.za)



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