

# PAC 101



## A Simple Look at the Parent Advisory Council

Developed and Demystified

By

the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council



# Function of Parent Advisory Councils



According to the B.C. School Act, the school parents, through their elected representatives on the Parent Advisory Council executive, may consult with the principal and staff of their school "...respecting any matter relating to the school other than matters assigned to the school planning council". Topics on which PACs offer advice and assistance may include:

- school philosophy and program priorities
- school regulations and general student conduct
- the curriculum, new instructional programs, facilities, equipment and learning resources
- budget, alterations and renovations to facilities
- safety programs and procedures
- alternatives for identifying, communicating and meeting unique community needs
- appropriate school evaluation matters
- communicating ideas from the community to the board of school trustees and school staff
- informing the community about decisions made at the school, district and ministry levels
- methods to ensure racial and cultural understanding and improve the sense of community within the school neighbourhood
- methods of resolving school-community differences and improving relations
- methods to encourage other community individuals and groups who do not have children of school age to attend meetings to express their ideas and share their concerns.

It should be noted that the Parent Advisory Council is not a forum for discussion of individual staff members or students. Such discussions should be arranged privately with the teacher, principal or associate superintendent by those concerned.

## Tips for Meetings

1. **Be prepared.** Know what you are going to do and why. Know what your priorities are, the alternatives, the time frame and who will give reports.
2. **Have an agenda.** Know what business will be conducted and in what order. Direct the meeting toward the purpose established for the meeting.
3. **Delegate work.** Guide and lead the group. Don't do it all yourself. Take advantage of the talent and experience in your group.
4. **Don't cover too much ground.** Keep expectations realistic. Plan your agenda so that sufficient time is set aside for priority items. Always adjourn at the designated time.
5. **Learn by doing.** Not every meeting will run smoothly, but the job of chairing will become easier with each meeting.

## Helpful Hints



- **Your best resources are the school principal and your district parents.** They can contribute valuable information to help establish guidelines for your meetings, activities and topics for discussion.

- **Prepare a statement for other parents.** Prepare a simple statement on why parents should be involved and how their children can benefit. Invite parents to attend a meeting at a specific time, date and place. Ensure at least two weeks advance notice.

- **Encourage parents to become involved.** Ask teachers to suggest a parent representative from each class who might be interested in getting involved. Teachers are often aware of parents and guardians who are interested in school activities.

- **Ensure good attendance by phoning members before each meeting.** Make this task easier by circulating a sheet of paper at meetings for parents and guardians to fill in names and phone numbers

- **Prepare an agenda in consultation with your executive and the principal.** Circulate copies prior to the meeting if possible. Ensure that all members of the executive committee receive copies well in advance.

The VSB Ready Reference is available for download from the VSB website

[www.vsb.bc.ca](http://www.vsb.bc.ca)

- **When problems arise, deal with them at once.** If there is concern among parents about a particular program or activity, don't let the dissension grow. Meet with your principal to discuss the issue. Explain the situation and ask your question.

Most problems can be solved within the school. If you feel you have exhausted the school's resources in dealing with your concern, the next step is to call the associate superintendent responsible for your area for help.

## How to Run a Meeting



Chairing a meeting is a challenging experience. But with a carefully prepared agenda and a few basic organizational skills you can hold a successful meeting.

These guidelines can be used as a model for meeting procedures.

### **The meeting agenda:**

- lets your PAC members know what to expect and how they might participate in the meeting
- provides order and direction to the meeting
- streamlines and shortens your meeting
- makes the job of the recording secretary easier, thus improving the accuracy of the minutes.

An agenda is simply a brief outline of **what you intend to discuss and in what order**. A well-planned agenda reflects the concerns and interest of your school community and is based on mutually defined goals.

## Planning Your Agenda

1. **Review previous minutes** for items that are pending and issues that were tabled or should be reported on.

2. Items on the agenda may be classified as follows:

### **For information**

- items that keep your PAC informed, but don't require immediate action (e.g., correspondence, announcement of events, progress reports)

### **Discussion, or tabling**

- items that require more discussion from your group before decisions are made
- business that should be referred to a smaller sub-committee for further discussion
- business that you choose to put aside (table) for the moment

### **For decision and action**

- items resulting from business referred to a sub-committee
- business that you feel your group should act upon

3. **Plan your time realistically.** Don't squeeze too many items onto the agenda. Set aside enough time for the important item, allow for the assignment and review of tasks.

4. **Indicate when the meeting will start and end.** Try to stick to your schedule.

5. **Don't forget to make people feel comfortable.** New parents may not know anyone. Introduce yourself and welcome everyone

## Agenda

Most commonly, the order of business on an agenda is as follows:



1. call to order & introduction of new members
2. approval of minutes of previous meeting & adoption of the agenda
5. business arising from the minutes (old business)
6. committee reports & correspondence
8. new business
9. program (guest speakers, principal's report etc.)
10. suggestions for future topics
11. adjournment

The positive response of principals and staff to parent involvement is  
the key to success.

## Special Activities and Events

- organize a hospitality night
- arrange small coffee parties to help parents new to the school meet other parents
- promote an open house with students acting as a hosts and hostesses
- plan a newsletter with contributions from staff, students and parents
- follow the newsletter with a phone call if you've advertised special events, to encourage attendance
- send a questionnaire home to determine other parents' interests
- organize events to raise funds for special items or projects



## Guide for Recording Your Minutes

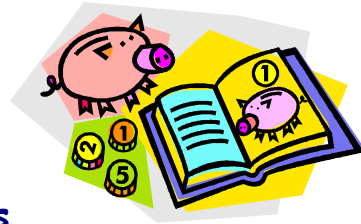
Here are a few ideas to help organize the recording of the minutes.

- Place this heading at the top of the first page: \_\_ Parent Advisory Council
- In the first section, include:
  - date and time of the meeting
  - place of meeting
  - name of chairperson
  - names of members present (pass around attendance sheet)
  - whether the previous minutes were approved or corrected
- Record ideas:
  - listen to the discussion and note only the main points
  - summarize
  - make the minutes brief and accurate
- Record any motions:
  - name the member who makes the motion and underline the action
  - it's unnecessary to include that the motion was seconded
  - state whether the motion carried or failed and underline it (e.g., Motion Carried)

### **Note correspondence and any action taken**

- Note program speaker and topic





## Money Matters

### PAC Bank Account

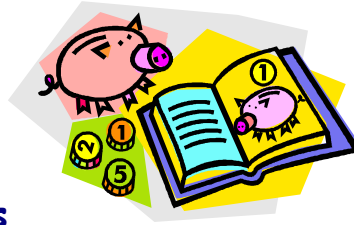
The PAC may open a bank account in its own name at the bank/financial institution of its choice. Any two of three designated members of the executive are named as authorized signatories of the account. Cash may be withdrawn, and checks written, with written authorization of any two of the authorized signatories. Should a problem arise, all members of the PAC as individuals may be held liable for the group's funds.

The PAC's treasurer should present regular financial statements to the PAC executive at its meetings, and to the whole parent body when it meets as the Parent Advisory Council.

A PAC raising and handling large sums of money — for instance, a PAC who funds an annual Quebec exchange — may choose to incorporate under the B.C. Societies Act. This incorporation protects individual PAC members who act in a responsible way from being personally liable for the funds. If a PAC chooses to incorporate, a bank account is opened in the society's name, with any two of three designated members of the executive as signatories.

If your PAC decides to incorporate, your area office should be able to provide you with sample documentation to use. When your PAC petitions to become a society, your constitution should include a section ensuring that your school principal is a non-voting member and is present at meetings. Your PAC should not be independent of the school.





## Money Matters

### Signing Authority

No matter what method of banking/tax deductibility arrangement your PAC chooses, authorized signatories are required. At your first PAC meeting after the incoming executive has been elected by the Parent Advisory Council, your PAC executive should designate authorized signatories by way of a motion that is recorded in your minutes:

**THE (YOUR SCHOOL NAME) PAC DESIGNATES ANY TWO OF THE FOLLOWING THREE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AS AUTHORIZED SIGNATORIES ON OUR (YOUR BANK'S NAME) ACCOUNT (NUMBER OF YOUR ACCOUNT): (NAME NUMBER ONE), (NAME NUMBER TWO), (NAME NUMBER THREE).**

Allowing any two of three authorized persons to carry out banking transactions makes it easier to manage PAC business if one of them is ill or out of town.