

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR MANITOBA PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE FOR PARENT GROUPS IN SCHOOLS

MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF PARENT COUNCILS 1005 – 401 YORK AVE. WINNIPEG, MB R3C 0P8

Ph: 204-956-1770 Toll Free: 1-877-290-4702 Fax: 204-956-7780

info@mapc.mb.ca www.mapc.mb.ca facebook.com/mapcmb twitter.com/mapcmb



RESOURCE GUIDE FOR MANITOBA'S PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS

*DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICE FOR PARENT
GROUPS IN SCHOOLS*

March, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils would like to thank the many individuals who brought the Resource Guide for Manitoba's Parent Advisory Councils to fruition. We would like to acknowledge and thank the MAPC Board of Directors for their vision of seeing the value such a guide could be to Parent Advisory Councils as well as for the guidance and editorial expertise they've provided. Special thanks to MAPC staff for their project management and design and layout of the guide. We would also like to express our gratitude to the MAPC members who volunteered to review and provide valuable feedback. Finally, MAPC is also grateful for the review and recommendations from all of our Educational Partners and Parliamentarian. It is through the collective efforts of these individuals that the MAPC Resource Guide for Manitoba's Parent Advisory Councils has come to realization and it is our sincere hope that it will effectively serve Parent Advisory Councils for years to come.



MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF PARENT COUNCILS

MISSION STATEMENT

The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils is dedicated to supporting, promoting, and enhancing meaningful involvement of parents and caregivers within school communities, representing their voice to all educational stakeholders to improve the education and well-being of children in Manitoba.

VISION

MAPC is recognized and respected as the parental voice within the public education system in Manitoba.

VALUES

MAPC values:

1. Teamwork among staff, with and within the Board of Directors, with members, and all education partners
2. Honesty in dealings with one another and with its membership
3. Integrity – MAPC actions reflect its words
4. Open and clear communication at all times
5. Respect for every individual involved in the organization and for the diversity represented in the province of Manitoba.



INTRODUCTION

This guide was created in response to many conversations with our membership, educational partners and funders. Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) often feel as though they are in need of guidance to understand and clarify their role as effective partners within their school communities. This Resource Guide for Manitoba's Parent Advisory Councils serves as a starting point for conversations and as a template for partnership development and relationship building within a school system. MAPC recognizes that the strength within a good relationship is crucial to empowering the parental voice. This guide will serve as that foundation for Parent Advisory Councils.

Let's get started!

-Note-

Throughout this guide, the term 'Parent Advisory Councils or PAC' is intended to collectively represent any parent group operating within a school community. This would include Advisory Councils for School Leadership (ACSL), Parent Councils, Home and School Associations, Parent Groups, or any variation of names which may be used.

Throughout this guide, the term 'Parent' is intended to collectively represent parents and caregivers of children attending school in Manitoba.

The Resource Guide for Manitoba's Parent Advisory Councils Guide is the sole property of Manitoba Association of Parent Councils and therefore cannot be duplicated in whole or in part without the written permission of MAPC.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge original sources and to comply with copyright law. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please notify Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. Errors or omissions will be corrected in future editions. Sincere thanks to the authors and publishers who allowed their original material to be adapted or reproduced.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1: Starting or Refreshing a Parent Council 8

 A. What is a Parent Advisory Council and Why do we Need One? 8

 B. Parent Volunteers 10

 Recruiting 10

 Training 12

 Retaining 12

 C. Relationship Building 14

 Administration, Staff, and School Division 14

 Parents in the School 15

 Community at Large 16

Section 2: Governing a Parent Advisory Council 17

 A. Roles and Responsibilities of the PAC 17

 B. Effective Meeting Strategies 18

 C. Effective Communication Strategies 19

 D. Constitutions and Policies 20

 Why do we need rules or a constitution? 20

 What do we do if we don’t have a constitution? 20

 Constitution Development 21

 Summarizing a Constitution 22

 E. Meeting Minutes and Agendas 23

 Preparing an Agenda 23

 Recording Meeting Minutes 23

 F. Voting, Motions and Action Items 24

 Voting Members 24



Quorum26

Conducting a vote26

Making Motions and Seconding Motions.....27

Abstaining From a Vote27

Assigning Actions27

G. Annual General Meeting28

 Why should a PAC hold an AGM?28

 Who attends the AGM?.....28

 Who votes at the AGM?29

 Who chairs the AGM?29

 What notice of the AGM is given to parents and partners in the community?29

 How do we present constitutional changes?.....29

 How do we conduct elections for Executive positions?29

 Steps for conducting a ballot based election:.....30

 How do we determine voting members?31

 What is a proxy vote?.....31

 What do we do with the minutes after the AGM?.....31

H. When Conflict Happens31

I. Ethics and Respect35

 Duties of Loyalty, Obedience, and Care35

 Code of Conduct35

 Stepping Up and Stepping Down35

J. Professional Development36

 Professional Development – why is this necessary?36

 Professional Development Modules36



Section 3: Financials and Fundraising	38
A. Financials.....	38
Financial Responsibility and Accountability.....	39
Role of the Treasurer	39
Budgets	39
Financial Reports	39
Audits or Reviews	40
Accounts and Signing Authority.....	40
Allocating Funds.....	40
Corresponding Motions/Approvals.....	41
Charitable Tax Receipts	41
B. Project Planning.....	41
Where do we start? Assess your school community's needs!.....	41
Set up a timeline	41
Set up a budget, if the project is going to need finances	41
Enlist a group of volunteers or a committee to manage and assist with the project	42
C. Grants and Proposals	42
Important Points to Remember.....	42
D. Short and Long Term Planning	43
Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)	44
Frequently Asked Questions about Constitutions:	44
Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Procedure as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order:.....	46
Section 5: Resources.....	51
A. MAPC	51
MAPC Advocacy Project	51



Professional Development	51
MAPC Provincial Tours	51
Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting	51
National Partnerships.....	52
Resolutions and Position Statements.....	52
Governance Resources.....	52
MAPC Membership Terms of Reference	52
Internet Links and other Online Opportunities.....	53
Goals and Future Plans.....	53
B. Manitoba Educational Stakeholders	53
Manitoba Education and advanced learning	53
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)	54
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS)	54
Manitoba School Board Association (MSBA)	55
The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS).....	55
Safe Schools Manitoba	56
Community Living Manitoba.....	56
Aboriginal Education Directorate.....	57

Section 6: Appendices

REFERENCES



SECTION 1: STARTING OR REFRESHING A PARENT COUNCIL

A. WHAT IS A PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

Why do we need a PAC?

PACs are created for a reason, and it is important to discuss and decide together what that purpose will be within a school community.

The Parent Advisory Council within a school has many functions and roles. *Examining this purpose may lead to the development of your PAC mission statement.* Some of the areas a PAC might work in include:

- Offering supports, advice, and feedback (*parental voice*) to school administration teams on a variety of issues such as attendance, safety concerns, supports for learning, school and divisional planning and more
- Offering or creating supports, direction, and enhanced learning opportunities for both current and future students
- Providing an internal support system to address gaps in either funding or programming in a school community

What are some of the things a PAC can be involved in?

The possibilities will be unique and should be decided together as a group in consultation with your school administration team. Some examples for consideration may include but are not limited to:

- School planning
- Divisional planning
- Lunch or breakfast programs
- Before and after school programs

DIFFICULTIES AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

This is a challenging time for a PAC to be involved at the school, when children might not be appreciative of their parent's involvement. Students at this age may crave more independence, but there is still a clear need for parental involvement at this level. These discussions might include:

Career / Transition planning

Emotional and social supports for items such as bullying, social media influence and peer pressure

Mental health

Guidance and coping skills

Local attendance issues and dropout rates

Support for school events and fundraising activities



- School committees concerning items of local interest such as safety issues, inclusive school environments, grounds development, and more
- Understanding curriculum and how families can provide supports for learning
- Understanding policies and processes within the school and school division and how to communicate these items to families
- Fundraising either for a large project, or smaller annual or ongoing needs
- Community building, like holding family nights or special events
- Communication with the parent community, through a newsletter or website
- Liaising with special groups, like the band program or sports teams
- Liaising with classrooms, to inform the school community of activities, or to address specific needs

In 2013, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning approved Bill 14 – Parent Groups for Schools – to amend the Education Administration Act, recognizing MAPC as the representative of parent advisory councils in Manitoba (with the exception of DSFM), and to amend the Public Schools Act, requiring school administrators to consult with their local parent advisory council regarding school planning as well as providing information to parents about their school PAC and how to participate or create one.



“Positive school climate is often linked to strong partnerships between schools and their communities, families, and parents. When all partners take responsibility for student learning, we share school improvement planning. People begin to work together and communicate more openly about needs, issues, and concerns that will make a difference in the lives of students.” (School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005)

B. PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parents in school communities volunteer for many different reasons. These include, but are not limited to:

- Having a personal connection to the school
- Wanting to know more about the school
- Looking for work experience
- Looking to make new friends
- Wanting to contribute a skill or talent
- Wanting to help their child have a better educational experience
- Looking to create change, and much more!



SO, HOW DO WE CONNECT WITH PARENTS IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND ENCOURAGE THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH OUR PACS?

RECRUITING

Where are all the bodies?

Parents can be found all over the place in many school communities. They are walking in the halls, dropping off their children, talking in the parking lot, assisting in the classrooms, and possibly thinking about becoming involved but are unsure about where and who they can speak to about helping out. Another possibility is that they do not know about the PAC or they do not realize their involvement is needed to assist in building a strong school community.



One idea is to approach these parents personally and start a conversation to introduce them to the idea of joining the PAC and help them to envision themselves working as a part of the group. The most common answer people give about why they don't volunteer is "Nobody asked me." Face to face meetings are crucial!

Everyone has a skill that can be shared. Look around your school community to see who has the expertise or skills that can potentially benefit your group or project. For example, your project might benefit from expertise such as someone experienced in writing proposals or having accounting skills. Teachers and principals are a great resource for identifying individuals in your community that could be beneficial to your group.

Have you thought about potential PAC members by searching other potential sources in your community, such as: kindergarten parents, daycare parents, other community governance boards (community clubs, sport teams, etc.), grandparents, and community service groups?

Decide on a plan to approach these individuals and ask for them to become involved!

ENCOURAGING INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION – THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR TO CONNECT WITH PROSPECTIVE PAC MEMBERS. IT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS STOPPING TO CHAT AND INVITING THEM TO A PAC MEETING, OR IT CAN INVOLVE A LITTLE MORE CREATIVE PLANNING AND STRATEGY. TAKE THE TIME TO BRAINSTORM WITH YOUR GROUP AND YOUR ADMINISTRATOR TO TRY SOMETHING NEW, SUCH AS:

- Introduce or speak for a moment about the PAC during assemblies and events
- Talk to parents on kindergarten enrolment days - maybe offer to host coffee and muffins for the new parents
- Include Parent Advisory Council information in the school's handbook or website
- Create a brochure to highlight the role the PAC plays in the school, and identify projects that you have completed or are currently working on
- Create a PAC newsletter, or speak to your school administrator about having PAC activities and meetings included in the school newsletter or on the school website. A number of schools and PACs are now using other forms of social media. All of these mediums are a great place to advertise that you are looking for volunteers for specific duties
- Have a volunteer sign-up during your opening day conferences, meet-the-teacher night or open house, or use that opportunity to gather parents' email addresses in order to communicate

Every opportunity that you have to talk about what you are doing and the importance of parental involvement gives you another way to get your message out to future participants in your group.



TRAINING

Once your group has decided on what direction to take to increase participation on your PAC, take some time to discuss with your PAC and administrator, the following:

- Is there an orientation process for volunteers required by all school volunteers?
- Do we understand and know how to access school and divisional policies of concern and interest to volunteers?
- Do we have an up to date copy of our constitution and current job descriptions/expectations for volunteers on our PAC?
- What risks are involved with volunteering in the school concerning privacy, safety, and health? Are volunteers and administration aware of these risks?
- Are Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector Checks required by your school division?
- What do we do if a conflict within the Parent Advisory Council arises?
- Is the school willing and able to assist with providing meeting space and tools necessary for the PAC to operate?

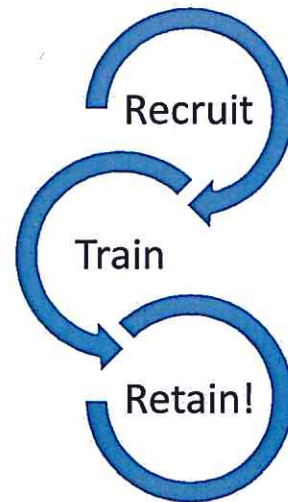
RETAINING

Addressing Challenges to Volunteering on a PAC

Examining these different reasons and looking around your community to identify your unique opportunities and challenges can help address any barriers that your group might be experiencing.

Discuss with your group some of these questions:

- Should we have our meetings on the same day and time every month to provide continuity, or should we alternate times and dates to provide additional opportunity for those who are traditionally unable to attend?
- How should we promote the meetings to reach people that we may be missing? School newsletter and website? Phone trees? School bulletin board? Email? School blogs? Social media sites? Electronic message boards? At local businesses that are frequented by parents in the community?
- Can we provide babysitting for parents with small children?
- Can we provide snacks or a meal?





ANOTHER IMPORTANT AREA FOR YOUR PAC TO EXAMINE IS IN ITS MEETING STRUCTURES. TAKE THE TIME TO LOOK AT YOUR GROUP WITH A CRITICAL EYE AND ANSWER SOME CRITICAL QUESTIONS.

- Is our communication clear, easy to understand, and - most importantly - easy to find?
- Is our group welcoming, friendly, and inviting, or could we appear to be cliquish or exclusive? What are we doing right and what areas do we need to improve?
- Do we give everyone the opportunity to participate and have their voices heard or are there some voices which dominate the conversation? Do we know where to direct questions that may not be appropriate for a PAC to address (i.e. specific student issues or school staff issues)?
- Do we encourage volunteers on the PAC to contribute in the manner they want to or do we fill the areas needing volunteers with whoever shows up first? Remember, not everyone wants to govern a PAC.
- Do we recognize our volunteers and thank them for a job well done? Are we specific with what our expectations are of volunteers on the PAC (time commitment, duties, reporting, etc.)? Do we contact them each time we need them, or do we assume they will just show up?
- What are some of the time challenges parents in our community are facing? How can we address these challenges?
- Are we open to feedback to make ourselves stronger?
- Do we always ensure that we have enough tasks for the bodies that step forward to volunteer? How do we address having too many people?



REMEMBER – VOLUNTEERS ARE WORKING WITH YOU FOR A REASON. IT IS CRUCIAL TO NOT TAKE THEM FOR GRANTED OR TO WASTE A VOLUNTEER'S TIME. WHEN A VOLUNTEER CHOOSES TO PARTICIPATE ON A PAC AND THEIR EFFORTS ARE RECOGNIZED, THEY LEAVE FEELING GREAT ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THE WORK THAT THEY ARE DOING.



“When parents are involved in the decision-making process they are more likely to support the decisions that are made. Parents, families, and community members provide valuable perspectives that enhance the decision-making process.” (School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth, 2005)

“Educating children and youth is an important and shared responsibility.” (School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth, 2005)

C. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

MAPC believes that creating and maintaining respectful relationships supports the parental role in school communities. A useful exercise for your PAC to consider would be to define what respectful behaviour looks like, so everybody is of the same understanding. There are many benefits to working together in a school community with a common goal in mind.

ADMINISTRATION, STAFF, AND SCHOOL DIVISION

The relationship between a PAC, the school and the divisional administration team is a crucial one for effective partnership development in a school community. All parties are dedicated to the students of the school and have educational goals for these students as a top priority.

By establishing a respectful relationship between the PAC, the school and the administration team, you are creating opportunities for richer discussion and deeper understanding of the school system. The administration team benefits from learning about different perspectives which exist in the community, as well as increased parental involvement for the benefit of the students. Simultaneously, the PAC benefits by developing a greater understanding of the processes and challenges, as well as the opportunities, that exist to support student learning and the educational experience in a school community.

While it is important to recognize the value of an effective relationship between the school administration teams and the PAC, it is also important to understand the parameters of these relationships for better understanding of all responsibilities involved in developing a successful group.

Set aside time at the start of every school year to have your PAC Executive meet with your administrator to discuss goals for the year and foster relationships!



Working closely with the school team is an effective way of reaching parents, families and community members. This partnership helps the school team to learn more about what it is that the PAC is working on and towards. It also helps to determine that your goals are in line with each other so you can provide mutual support as needed. It is also a valuable tool for gaining additional insight and feedback as you work on projects benefitting students in the school community.

It is also important to work closely with the school team so projects do not compete or interfere with each other. Remember, both the PAC and the school are using the same target group for projects and fundraisers and you want to avoid donation and volunteer fatigue or strain, financially or otherwise.

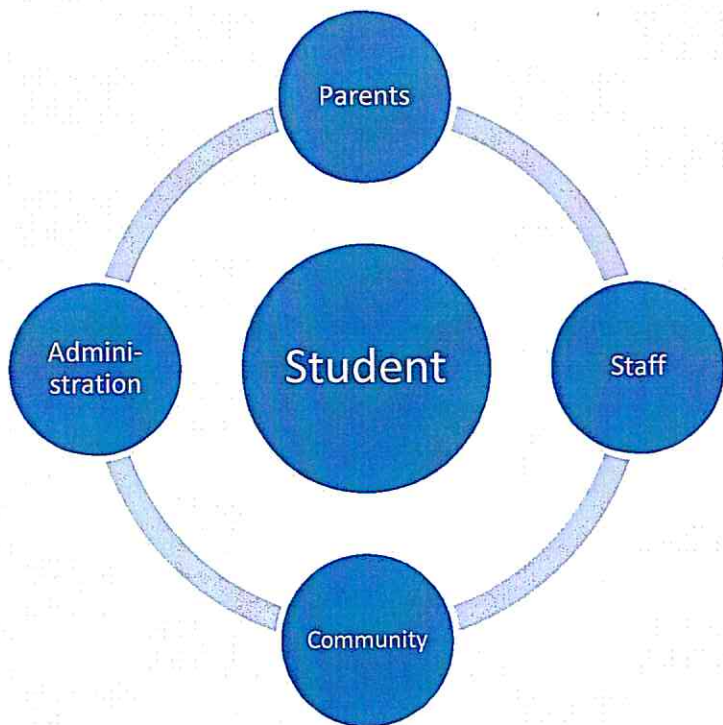
A good idea might be to use a planning calendar to plan projects for both the school and the PAC over the course of a school year so you are working together and taking turns supporting each other's endeavours.

The principal, teachers, and school trustees operate as ex officios on the PAC – they are there by the nature of their position. Their role is to provide resource, guidance, and support to the PAC for increased understanding of the school and division and its events, policies, and other items affecting the school community

PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL

Parents volunteer to serve on parent councils for a variety of reasons and come to the meetings prepared with a

variety of skills they have gathered during their lifetimes outside of the school community. Parents often choose to volunteer on their local PAC because they believe in education and want to be a strong partner in supporting the students and the school community. There can also be a number of other reasons why they choose to volunteer. It is important to keep a few things in mind when working with a diverse group in a governance setting:



- Differing opinions often lead to the best solutions after discussion and making decisions together
- Open, honest, and respectful communication is critical for building trusting relationships
- Having an agreed upon process for operating the PAC (see Section 2: Governing a



PAC) leads to better understanding between members as well as more efficient meetings

- Everyone has an interest and a shared responsibility to participate on the PAC
- PAC executive is not the sole decision maker and is there to lead and ensure balanced participation by all members of the Parent Advisory Council
- The PAC should represent parents in the school whenever possible

Not every parent wants to serve on the PAC and some may not even know or understand what a PAC is all about. Most people recognize that the parents who do serve on a PAC are commonly understood to be “parent leaders” or representative of parents in a school community. PAC members often act as cheerleaders in the community to promote active and meaningful parental involvement in school. They are also critical in promoting the work the PAC does, informing the community about matters of interest to parents and students, encouraging respectful relationships with the school team, and conversing with parents to discover how parents might want to participate in the school community or what matters are of great interest and importance to them. Creating these relationships is sometimes a way to generate further interest in what a PAC does and can often be used as a recruitment tool for identifying potential PAC members in the future!

COMMUNITY AT LARGE

Some PACs choose to have “community members” who play an active role in the group and provide additional resource and assistance in achieving their goals. It is often a benefit to develop these relationships with community members who are interested in education, as there is a potential for additional skills, talents, and other volunteer opportunities which contribute to the richness of the educational experience for students. It is important to keep the following in mind when working with the community at large:

- The PAC may not be the only group trying to gain its support
- Recognize their time, input, efforts, and donations





“When parents, families, and the community are involved in the education of children and youth, student achievement tends to increase, students feel more supported, and students’ attitudes change in a positive way.” (School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities, Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth, 2005)

SECTION 2: GOVERNING A PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

A. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PAC

It's important to remember that the PAC operates under its school division's guidelines and policies. Check local school division policy to better understand divisional expectations.

PACs play an important role in; decision making and accountability, supporting school and division planning, collaborating with families in a school community, fundraising initiatives, and supporting student learning and experiences at school and in the home.

By establishing a PAC in a school community, parents are given a forum to participate in their school communities in a meaningful way. It is a place to discuss concerns about education, create understanding about how to support student learning both in school and in the home, create relationships with the school for stronger communities, plan for large and small scale projects, and much more.

By creating opportunities for rich dialogue and feedback, schools develop stronger partnerships with families and are able to gain new insight and perspectives on some of the challenges they are experiencing or opportunities they may be missing.

Effective PACs make schools stronger!



B. EFFECTIVE MEETING STRATEGIES

Meetings are held in order to inform a PAC about information and issues requiring attention as well as to conduct PAC business. PAC business should include, but not be limited to; receiving reports from teachers and administration, planning events, providing input to school and divisional planning, organizing fundraisers, and addressing concerns brought to the PAC's attention.

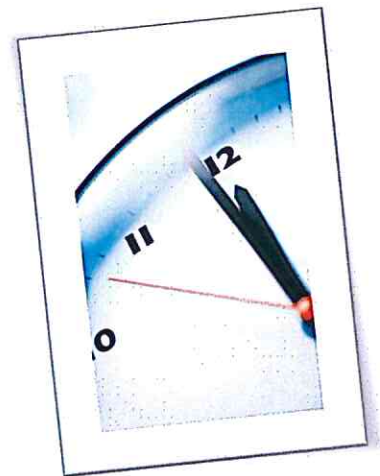
Meetings provide an opportunity to share ideas and concerns and to come to agreement about projects and activities that might benefit the school community.

Being prepared in advance of the meeting will ensure that everyone has the information they need so they can participate and make informed decisions.

STAYING ON TOPIC:

PAC members are often excited about information that is being shared and conversation usually flows freely when these discussions are being held. It is tricky to provide the balance which allows for discussion while respecting time limits put forth in the agenda.

This task is part of the chairperson's responsibility. After allowing for a few minutes of discussion about a topic which excites the group, the chairperson might then remind the group of the agreed upon time limit set in the agenda and proceed to ask whether there is any objection to continue the discussion, revisit the topic at the next meeting, or arrange an additional meeting to discuss the topic in greater detail. Each suggestion has merit as well as concern. However, it is up to the chairperson to lead the group towards a decision which the group arrives at and agrees upon together. This might include gathering more information or examining items in greater detail, when time is not pressured.



If the topic is a heated one and emotions are running high, the same process might be followed or the chair can request a short break (a recess) to allow participants to "cool off". If the tone of the meeting has become too heated, disrespectful, or unsafe the chair can also choose to end the discussion, or the meeting, as a last resort.



C. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Many PACs struggle with trying to communicate with its members (parents and families in a school community). Often, there is a sense of frustration as current methods are seen as not being effective.

MAPC recommends that whenever possible, PACs should try to utilize a variety of methods to try and engage parents in participating on the PAC, as a volunteer within the school community, or working with their child to further enhance their educational experience.

REACHING PARENTS – HAVE YOU TRIED?

- The school website
- Printing newsletters and distributing them throughout the community where your parents will find them? (i.e. banks, grocery stores, gas stations)
- Using the same night, OR alternating days/times to hold your PAC meetings? Where are the time conflicts parents are experiencing in your community?
- Using visuals such as posters or pictures of projects being worked on in places parents can see them in the school and in the community
- Translating newsletters and notices for parents whose first language is not English? (This might be a great place to find some volunteers with a specific skill!)
- Using email bulletins or Facebook? (Check your divisional policies!)
- Phone trees or Twitter? (Check your divisional policies!)
- Setting up a PAC display at Meet the Teacher nights and other events?
- Face to face meetings with new and returning parents to the school community?

PLEASE NOTE: INCREASED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS HAS RESULTED IN SOME DIVISIONS REVISING OR CREATING POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF THESE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION. ENSURE YOUR GUIDELINES REFLECT ANY EXISTING POLICIES BY CHECKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL DIVISION BEFORE UTILIZING.



D. CONSTITUTIONS AND POLICIES

WHY DO WE NEED RULES OR A CONSTITUTION?

It is really important to work as a team and rules allow us the boundaries we need in order to do that effectively. Rules allow for respectful conversations and ensure that everyone understands what is being asked or expected of them. Constitutions are also useful when conflicts arise as they can answer the questions that may come up and provide clarity for running a PAC.

WHAT DO WE DO IF WE DON'T HAVE A CONSTITUTION?

Plan to make one as soon as you possibly can. You can start by enlisting volunteers to start a working group to create one for presentation at your next (or first) Annual General Meeting. Make sure to provide opportunities for the school community to give feedback with timelines to complete the project!

You can also ask other PACs in your community - with a similar school makeup - to examine a copy of theirs to start your own discussions. Go through it line by line to see what you may want to consider adding or what might be missing from your own document.

DON'T FORGET – YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY IS UNIQUE SO MAKE THE DOCUMENT RELEVANT TO YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS!

It's also advisable to have this working group create a brief *terms of reference* to outline the general workings of its meetings. It should include how meeting dates will be determined, meeting location(s), who makes up the group, how voting and decisions will be handled, and a reporting structure to the community. For new PACs, a Terms of Reference Document often ends up contributing to the development of the constitution as well, as it gives you the ability to create your working conditions and initial rules to discover what works (or doesn't) in your school community.

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

A constitution is the foundation document for building an effective Parent Advisory Council. It should contain all the key agreements made by members on how the PAC will work. In law it is called the "*founding document*" and it is legally binding on the executive and members of the PAC.



A TERMS OF REFERENCE IS A GOOD PLACE TO START FOR NEW GROUPS, AS IT WILL ALLOW YOU TO MAKE CHANGES AS REQUIRED, WITHOUT HAVING TO GO THROUGH THE FORMALITY OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AT YOUR AGM.

CONSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT

A constitution is the foundation for building an effective PAC. They are not plans and should not need to be changed regularly. However, MAPC recommends that they be reviewed on an annual basis to address any areas of concern which may require a constitutional change at the next AGM (*see Annual General Meetings*). A constitution should tell its readers the following information:

- The name of the PAC
- **Why** the PAC exists, its mission, purpose, and objectives
- **Who** the PAC's key stakeholders are and who benefits from the work it does
- **How** the PAC intends to work and the basic structures for decision making and getting the work done including dealing with the finances of the PAC

A CONSTITUTION SHOULD BE CLEAR AND SIMPLE SO MEMBERS OF THE PAC AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY UNDERSTAND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, MANDATE, AND HOW TO REMAIN ACCOUNTABLE.

The constitution should have detailed and clear sections on, but not limited to:

- The purpose of the PAC: why it exists, who benefits from its work and how they should benefit
- The objectives of a PAC: what it intends to achieve
- A Code of Conduct for members
- The membership of a PAC: Who may become a member? What are the duties and rights of members? How you join and how members can resign? How many members will you have and what will the executive positions be?
- The structures and main procedures of decision-making in your PAC including:
 - annual general meetings and other regular and/or irregular meetings
 - elections and appointments for the different positions within the PAC and the general roles and responsibilities of those positions
 - Voting procedures including who can vote, what constitutes quorum, and how voting ties are broken. Include proxy voting and if email or telephone voting is allowed
 - The finances of the PAC are how they are managed so that no money or resources that belong to or are controlled by the PAC can be abused or misused. (see Fundraising and Financials)



- Financial year-end and audit process that tell you when your annual financial account will be finalized and audited and who the report will go to. (Should be based on the policy of local school divisions) (see Fundraising and Financials)
- Closing down the PAC: what process must be followed and what will happen to any money or assets of the PAC. (see Fundraising and Financials)

HELPFUL HINT TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN DEVELOPING A CONSTITUTION

Only the main structures and their functions should be covered, as you may want to change parts of the structure from time to time. For example you may say "The Chair, secretary, treasurer and at least three additional members will be elected as an executive at the AGM" This allows you to change the number and the positions on the executive as your needs change, without having to amend your constitution.

SUMMARIZING A CONSTITUTION



Constitutions are long term decisions.

Constitutions should be written so that they will not need to be changed often. Consider your community and its current needs, as well as determine to the best of your ability its future needs when creating or amending a constitution. Day-to-day administrative

information or "job descriptions" for each position are very useful for PACs, and would be considered policy.

They can be changed [amended] if members feel the need to make new agreements about the basic principles and operations of the PAC. This should take place at your AGM only. (See Annual General Meetings)

Constitutions should not be too detailed. They should record only those agreements that will remain true throughout the life of the PAC or until some major change happens. They should not, for example, include specific funding events or objectives that are short term.

See Appendices: [Sample Constitution](#)



E. MEETING MINUTES AND AGENDAS

PREPARING AN AGENDA

It is the responsibility of the Chairperson – in consultation with the PAC Executive, Members, and School Administrator - to create the agenda. It must include the meeting date, time, and location. It provides structure for the Chairperson and participants to follow.

Any individual who is being requested to speak at the meeting should be given adequate notice, so as to come prepared to address any questions in advance. Any individual requesting an item be included on the agenda should be given consideration. If there is a timing or topic of relevance conflict, it should be discussed privately prior to the meeting and an alternative decided upon in advance.

Ideally, agendas should be prepared and distributed in advance of a PAC meeting, in order to give members time to consider the items being discussed and formulate any questions or thoughts they may want to present. This can be done in a variety of ways (posted on a bulletin board, sent out electronically, mailed, delivered through backpacks, etc.), based on your school's needs and capabilities

IT IS THE CHAIR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE AGENDA AND TIMINGS CONTAINED WITHIN BE FOLLOWED AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE. IF SOMETHING IS GOING OVER THE TIME ALLOCATION, REQUEST AN EXTENSION OF TIME, OR THAT THE ITEM BE POSTPONED TO A FUTURE TIME OR DATE.

SEE APPENDICES: [Sample Agenda](#)

RECORDING MEETING MINUTES

Meeting minutes are a permanent, legal record of the PAC meeting. It is the responsibility of the PAC Secretary (or designate) to record the meeting as it proceeds. Minutes should include what was done, not what was said. It must include the name of the group, date, time and location of the meeting, a list of all individuals present including PAC members who are absent or have sent regrets.

The body of the minutes should include the approval or amendment of the agenda as presented, the approval or amendment of the meeting minutes from the previous meeting, acceptance of the Treasurer's report, motions made recorded verbatim (word for word), whether carried or not, action items to be undertaken including the person(s) responsible, and a list of the correspondence, reports, and documents presented at the meeting.



Meeting discussions should be recorded as a brief and objective summary of the key points made during the discussion. The entire and exact conversation of “who said what” is unnecessary. Ideally, meeting minutes should be sent to membership in advance of the next scheduled PAC meeting, in order to give members time to review what was discussed.

NAMES SHOULD ONLY EVER BE RECORDED IN THE ATTENDANCE SECTION OF THE MINUTES AND WHEN A MOTION OR ACTION ITEM IS RECORDED. THEY ARE NOT NECESSARY FOR A SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE.

SEE APPENDICES: [Sample Minutes](#)

F. VOTING, MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

VOTING MEMBERS

The constitution should outline what the minimum and maximum numbers are for voting members on a PAC. For example, if the constitution states that there should be a minimum 5 and a maximum 15 voting members, then that is the number range that you would follow. **Please note that if you only have 10 parents wanting to hold a vote that does not mean that you necessarily have to fill the other 5 voting spots.**

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PACS TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHO WILL CARRY VOTING RIGHTS ON THE PAC.

Typically, it is not appropriate for the principal, teacher representative, or trustee representative to hold a vote, as they can be perceived as having undue influence over the vote. However, MAPC recognizes the need for a school community to have autonomy to make these local decisions to address concerns such as staff of the school or division who also have children in the school, team building, and other unique situations. MAPC recommends that if school staff is able to hold a vote, that PACs take the time to review their constitutions and discuss questions such as:

- How many staff are permitted to sit on a PAC, and in what capacity?
- Are they permitted to sit on the Executive?
- Can staff members equal or outnumber the parents on the council who are not employees of the division or school?

Coming to a decision together to address topics such as this will help to address any concerns that may come up in the future relating to the topic.



THERE ARE TWO COMMON BELIEFS HELD IN MANITOBA ABOUT WHO IS ALLOWED TO VOTE AT A PAC MEETING.

The first is that every parent of a child attending the school has the right to vote in all matters related to the PAC. This method encourages participation by individuals who may not normally attend the PAC and promotes inclusive communities. However, it runs the risk of having a stacked vote, where participants may not have the full understanding of the issue – only a position based on friendships or personal feelings.

The second recognizes Voting Members as having a formal position on the PAC. A Voting Member would be expected to attend meetings regularly so as to have a full understanding of items being voted on and helps to ensure there is always quorum at the meeting. However, some groups experience difficulty recruiting the number of people required to fill the positions or run the risk of having other parents feeling left out when they are unable to vote on issues of importance to them.

ALL parents within a school community are allowed a VOICE. PACs must consult with their school and parent community to determine voting privileges for their community.

In both cases ALL parents within a school community are allowed a voice. The only question is whether they all have a vote or not. This is a local decision that must be made by the PAC in consultation with the school and school division, to ensure they are addressing the community's needs and philosophy to the best of its ability.

If a voting member of PAC needs to leave their position for any reason during the year, the PAC has the option of filling that spot for the duration of the year. The individual would typically be voted in during a PAC meeting. MAPC does, however, recommend reviewing your policy or constitution in advance of holding a vote. Whatever the constitution states would be the rule to abide by.

Serious consideration needs to be made by anyone holding a vote on a PAC. These considerations would include:

- Voting members need to attend meetings regularly
- Only voting members have the ability to put forth motions and to second motions
- Voting members and non-voting members are able to speak and be involved in all discussions – except in the case of in-camera discussions
- Voting members must understand that non-attendance affects quorum



QUORUM

Quorum is the minimum number of voting members that must be present in order for voting to take place. Quorum is normally considered to be more than half of the voting council members. If there is no quorum at the meeting, then the meeting becomes an “informational” one where discussions can be held but no motions, formal votes, allocations of funds or expenditures can be decided on.

Ex officio members (such as a principal, teacher or trustee representative) are not counted in quorum, unless they are permitted voting rights.

PACS OFTEN STRUGGLE WITH A LACK OF QUORUM AT MEETINGS AND HOW TO ADDRESS THE ABILITY TO CONDUCT BUSINESS WHEN THIS HAPPENS. THERE ARE CERTAIN STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE CONSIDERED AND MAPC MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT MAPC TO CONSIDER SOME OPTIONS WHICH MAY WORK IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

CONDUCTING A VOTE

New PACs need to decide how voting will take place within their respective groups. It should be agreed that all votes pass either by a majority (where a vote has the majority of the group in favour or against passing it) or by consensus (where the whole group must be in agreement with the direction that a vote takes). A majority vote should be conducted either by ballot or a show of hands – it is a local decision and there is no “right” way.

Consensus also differs from Formal Voting

Formal voting requires a motion with a seconder so that the topic is put in front of the PAC to discuss and explore until members are ready to make a decision. The decision is made through a formal vote. PAC members vote in favour of or against what is being presented to them. The result is then recorded and may result in an action item that is noted in the minutes.

NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS AND HOW THEY VOTED ARE NOT NECESSARY FOR INCLUSION IN THE MINUTES.

Consensus voting is slightly different and less formal. A discussion may be held, facilitated by the PAC chair. They may “go around the table” to see where members stand on the issue and if there is a general consensus (agreement) the PAC chair can say that the PAC supports the decision and there is no need for a formal vote to be held.

MAPC STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT ANY MOTION CONCERNING FINANCES REMAIN FORMAL, TO PROTECT THE PAC FROM ANY LIABILITY (SEE FUNDRAISING AND FINANCIALS)



MAKING MOTIONS AND SECONDING MOTIONS

When a proposed item comes up on the agenda, a voting member would then move the motion. ("I move that we spend up to \$500 on books for the school library."). A seconder then supports the item presented ("I second the motion."). It is critical that the secretary record the full name of the individuals involved in making the motion! The Chair would then open the motion for discussion by the members present. There may be questions or comments needing to be addressed prior to a vote being held. If the Chair feels that the discussion has run its course, he/she calls for a vote. He/she asks first for all those in favour, and next all those opposed – and the motion is then recorded as either adopted or defeated. There is no need to record numbers – unless a PAC's practice requires it to do so.

Reports such as the Treasurer's report are usually accepted in the minutes and are filed. If your PAC uses an auditor or your school division's policy dictates such, an Auditor's report must be formally adopted.

Motions to approve, adopt or amend (correct) the agenda and meeting minutes are also required, but can be stated by anyone on the PAC.

SEE APPENDICES: [Motion Form Template](#)

HINT!

PACs may want to create Motion Forms to assist in the accurate recording of motions made during meetings

ABSTAINING FROM A VOTE

Abstentions (not participating in a vote) should only ever be allowed when a PAC member is in a position of Conflict of Interest, or when they were not privy to vital information regarding the item being voted on. Abstentions should never be used as a means of non-committal for fear of offending a fellow PAC member. A secret ballot should be considered if this is the case. Abstentions should not be recorded unless a person specifically requests that this be done.

ASSIGNING ACTIONS

The end result of a voted item usually results in an action. This means that someone needs to do something! Sometimes, decisions are made and quickly forgotten by the next meeting – especially if the meeting minutes do not come out to our members in a timely manner.



It is important to make a note of any items or discussions resulting in an action to be taken. For example, *“Follow up with teachers on their wish list – PAC Chair”* This helps individuals remember what was decided and what needs to be done and who is the person responsible.

G. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All PACs are expected to hold an annual general meeting (AGM) once during the school year which is open to all parents and interested stakeholders in the school community. The AGM is an opportunity for all members, both voting and non-voting, to learn about the PAC and what it has accomplished over the past year.

WHY SHOULD A PAC HOLD AN AGM?

The business of the Annual General Meeting is to:

- Receive reports of activities conducted during the past year including a presentation of annual financial statements;
- Present and approve any Constitutional changes;
- Adopt a budget for the coming year;
- Receive reports from executive and other committees;
- Appoint voting members and elect executive positions; and
- Share or transact any other business requiring the input from members.



WHO ATTENDS THE AGM?

All parents who have children attending the school may participate in the AGM, in addition to the principal and teacher representative(s) as ex-officios, and anyone else who is interested in the school community and is recognized within your constitution as “community members”. This is also the time that new parents or school members wishing to become involved with the PAC should come forth to learn more.



WHO VOTES AT THE AGM?

Any parent attending the AGM should carry a vote, but check your constitution as there may be restrictions (e.g. one vote per family).

WHO CHAIRS THE AGM?

The AGM is usually led by the PAC chair or, in their absence, the Vice Chair.

WHAT NOTICE OF THE AGM IS GIVEN TO PARENTS AND PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY?

MAPC recommends that advance notice of the upcoming AGM be presented to the community with enough time to review any constitutional changes or material that will be presented for input. A good rule of thumb is four weeks, if a group has the ability to post or circulate materials needing to be considered or reviewed. In some school divisions, an ad may be placed in the local newspaper on behalf of the PAC to advertise its AGM.

The principal should be consulted regarding the date and any other information that would be presented to the participants so they are prepared to address any questions from their perspective as administrator.

HOW DO WE PRESENT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES?

Constitutional changes should be circulated to members ahead of time so they can review the information and be informed about proposed changes. It's a good idea to request any grammatical or spelling errors be presented in advance (with a specific deadline) to avoid using time at the AGM for editing purposes.

It's a good idea to show the original wording, the proposed change in wording and the rationale or reason for the change of wording for members to consider in advance of an AGM. Have copies available at the AGM as well. This will often help to save time.

HOW DO WE CONDUCT ELECTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE POSITIONS?

Start by asking an impartial person to conduct the election. Often, the principal, teacher representative, or another community member will take on this role. A director of MAPC may be available to assist as well, when available.

A "call for nominations from the floor" for each position, starting with the Chairperson's position is made. This will be followed by the Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

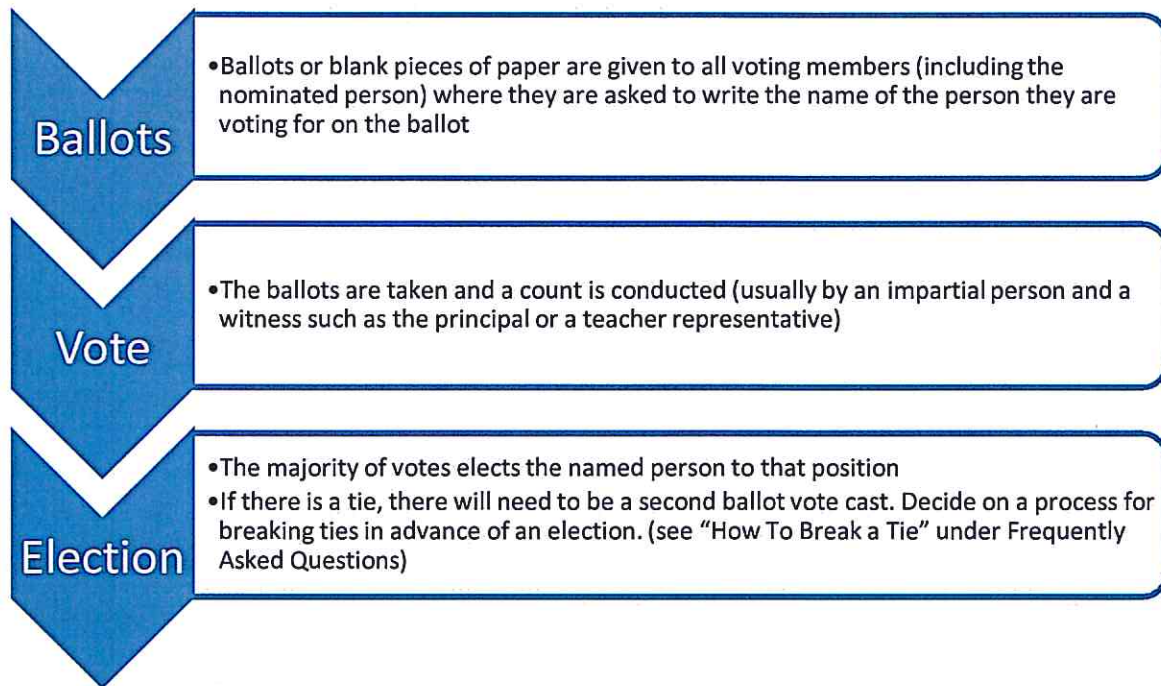


The person nominated must be asked if they “agree to let their name stand” and a nomination must be supported by a mover and a seconder.

If they are the only person nominated and a request has been asked three times for further nominations for that position (as recommended by Robert’s Rules of Order) then the person is declared as being “acclaimed” to that position.

If there is more than one nomination for a position, an election must be held. This can be done either by ballot or by a show of hands with all who are present at the AGM. MAPC recommends that this be done by ballot in order to ensure individuals are voting what they believe, rather than what they wish to display. Decide on a process in advance.

STEPS FOR CONDUCTING A BALLOT BASED ELECTION:



NOTE: SOMETIMES IT MAKES SENSE TO ALLOW THE CANDIDATES TO SPEAK FOR A MOMENT OR TWO PRIOR TO THE SECOND VOTE SO THAT THEY CAN LET THE GROUP KNOW MORE ABOUT THEM AND WHY THEY ARE INTERESTED IN ASSUMING THAT ROLE ON THE PAC.



HOW DO WE DETERMINE VOTING MEMBERS?

All parents and community members are welcome at the AGM, but refer to your constitution if there are any additional pieces which need to be considered when reviewing voting practices.

WHAT IS A PROXY VOTE?

A proxy vote is a vote from a voting member of the PAC that is given to someone else to cast. This is usually done when a member is unable to attend the AGM and they still want their vote to be considered. A PAC should determine its proxy vote process well in advance of its AGM, in order to ensure transparency and fairness for members.

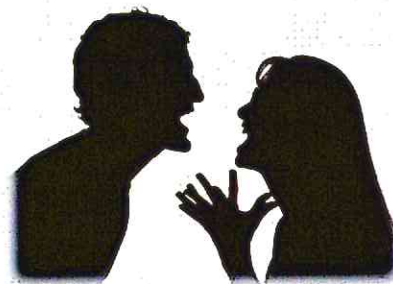
MAPC, allows its membership to complete a form that shows that they have given their vote (and direction to vote) to someone else to cast at its AGM.

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE MINUTES AFTER THE AGM?

The minutes of the meeting are recorded and presented back to the PAC for review and approval as draft minutes only. The AGM minutes will be presented at the next AGM (one year later) to be formally adopted by membership, with any changes or amendments recorded and referenced in the current year.

H. WHEN CONFLICT HAPPENS

People don't always work well together, get along, or act appropriately. This is human nature when groups of people interact with each other. Every individual comes with a different set of communication styles, experiences, understandings, and perceptions which can lead to conflict as a natural process in life. Acknowledging this and creating a process to address these moments can help a group deal with conflict in a respectful and effective way. MAPC also encourages PACs to learn about the school and divisional Code of Conduct so they are familiar with the behaviour that is expected of adults working in the school community.





WHAT DO WE DO WHEN...?

What should I do when a PAC member acts disrespectfully?

- Remain calm. Most actions are not meant as being disrespectful, but can often be seen as such. Ask yourself, "Where is this coming from"? If you don't know, ask. Remain respectful at all times.
- Identify the behaviour that is being seen as disrespectful, don't focus on the personality.
- Set up ground rules for your meetings that all members can agree to, such as no name calling, yelling, or swearing, and to be conscious of unspoken body language which may be interpreted as aggressive or threatening.
- Remind members to stick to the ground rules.
- Have a plan of action for ongoing behaviour issues that is agreed upon by the PAC and administrator in advance. This might include pausing or stopping a meeting or asking someone to leave if behaviour gets out of hand.

REMEMBER – ALL ADULTS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO IDENTIFY BAD BEHAVIOUR THAT IS IMPACTING THE WORK OF THE PAC BY MAKING ANYONE FEEL UNWELCOME OR UNWANTED. WORK WITH YOUR PAC AND ADMINISTRATOR TO AGREE UPON CERTAIN PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOUR SO EVERYONE HAS THE SAME OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE.

What do I do when a PAC member seems to have a "hidden agenda"?

Sometimes, individuals become involved in a PAC with a plan to change something that is of personal interest to them. It may be a concern with a particular student or teacher, or a personal concern that is not appropriate for the PAC to address. Knowing the role and responsibility your PAC plays in the school community, as well as school and divisional processes and where to find them often helps to redirect the individual to the appropriate channels. Sometimes, concerns that may be personally based can be answered in generalities, which may help the individual to be heard. An example of this might include a parent who comes to a PAC meeting to ask about what punishment a child received who was bullying their child. While the specific child can't be discussed at a PAC meeting, the PAC may want to coordinate a "Bullying Awareness" meeting, where the principal, division, and professionals experienced in bullying can come together to develop community understanding of policies and process, as well as learn about programs parents and PACs can explore together.

You can also try:

- Directing the individual to the appropriate rules and policies for the PAC, school, or division. If you don't know where these are, promise to look into it and follow up with them at a later date.
- Using any of the strategies listed previously (see "How do I deal with disrespectful behaviour?")
- Getting guidance and support from the school administration as necessary



How can I ensure that everyone feels safe and comfortable enough to contribute something at the meeting without fear or ridicule?

It's important for every PAC to take time to discuss together how the group will engage with each other in a respectful manner. Setting up some basic meeting rules and beliefs is often helpful. These might include:

- Respecting everyone's opinion – even when it differs from our own
- Not making disrespectful comments or behaviour in response to a suggestion or idea presented by another member
- Identifying bad behaviour when it shows itself. Focus on the behaviour NOT the individual!

IF MATTERS BECOME VOLATILE AND ORDER CANNOT BE RESTORED, IT IS APPROPRIATE TO CONSIDER * CALLING FOR A TIME OUT FOR TEMPER TO COOL DOWN, * LEAVING THE ROOM/MEETING IF NECESSARY, * ENDING THE MEETING EARLY, OR *ENLISTING THE HELP OF THE PRINCIPAL OR DIVISION IF SAFETY IS A CONCERN

How do I work with members who are not respecting the rules the PAC agreed to?

Start by revisiting and restating the ground rules established by your PAC.

It sometimes helps to meet with the individual in question privately first, to ask about the behaviour and what they feel can be done to address it. This is often an area that the administrator may be helpful in providing assistance, if you are not comfortable doing so on your own.

You can also:

Refer to any of the strategies outlined above and plan a course of action in advance whenever possible.

Does the principal have the responsibility to run PAC meetings?

The relationship between a PAC and the school principal is recognized as being a respectful partnership which provides mutual support, resource and advice. Principals participate on a PAC as ex-officio members, meaning that they are there by nature of their position. They are responsible for everything that goes on in a school community. They should not be setting the agenda, but could be included in determining items to include on the agenda as a matter of respect for both the PAC and the school.

It is not appropriate for any school official to carry a vote on PAC matters, as there may be a perception of undue influence being used. However, if the PAC should decide that it wishes for any or all of them to carry a vote, it should ensure that it has strong conflict of interest policies, policies as to whether they can occupy executive positions or not, and other guidelines to address any potential conflict which may occur, contained



within the constitution. This should also include the allowable number of seats that might be allowed for staff of the school and/or division to occupy (if they are parents of students attending).

While principals should not be running a PAC, it is important to realize that if the PAC is negatively impacting the school community, they can suspend the operation of the PAC until the matter can be cleared up and addressed. This is an option that should only ever be utilized as a last resort, and MAPC would encourage PACs and principals to visit a variety of other resources before coming to this decision, of which MAPC might be one.

When Hot Button Topics Are Discussed:

Be informed: Know what is happening around your school community and division. Keep a solid line of communication with administration and teachers. Listen to what your parents are saying and working with. Be aware of student concerns and wishes.

Be proactive: Whenever possible, focus on prevention rather than reaction to concerns in your school community.

Be respectful: Work together with staff and administration to deal with concerns; especially those of a sensitive or confidential nature. Understand that concerns might be confidential. Knowing the chain of command or concern protocol will help when problems arise. Always start the conversation with the teacher and move upwards from there.

Be inclusive: Look for participation by all members of your school communities; new families, newcomers to the community, non-traditional families, students and others. If they need to be at the table to provide input and feedback, ensure that their voice is included and heard.

Be professional: Act in an ethical and honourable manner at all times. Treat every person and every opinion with respect.

Be thorough: Get all the information needed in order to make informed decisions. Hear all sides of the story or issue. Deal with facts and not emotions whenever possible and be compassionate and honest in all dealings within your school community and with each other.



**HELP YOUR PAC
BECOME MORE
EFFECTIVE BY
HOSTING A
MAPC
PRESENTATION**

*Roles and
Responsibilities of
Parent Advisory
Councils*

*Parent Volunteers –
Getting Them to Sign
on, Show up and
Stay Engaged*

*What is MAPC ...and
Why Should Parents
and Education
Partners Support it?*

*Effective Meetings
for Parent Advisory
Councils*

I. ETHICS AND RESPECT

DUTIES OF LOYALTY, OBEDIENCE, AND CARE

Understanding the Universal Standards of Conduct help to ensure that a governing group – such as a PAC - is operating ethically and appropriately. These include the Duty of Loyalty, Obedience, and Care.

Duty of Care is met when members attend meetings regularly, are prepared and informed and they act in the best manner possible for all decisions made when voting.

Duty of Obedience is met when members act in accordance with the PAC rules and policies in addition to school and divisional guidelines and local law.

Duty of Loyalty is met when members demonstrate that they are dedicated to the mission of the PAC and school, and will put the group's interests above self-interest.

CODE OF CONDUCT

It is very important that a PAC understands and supports its school and divisional code of conduct. PACs may also want to consider developing its own code of conduct to mirror school and divisional policies, but are reflective of the expectations of parents volunteering on a PAC and in a school community.

STEPPING UP AND STEPPING DOWN

What happens when a PAC member is unable to honour the duties of loyalty, obedience, and care OR the code of conduct? Every PAC should consider developing policy to address what to do when a member is unable to honour the group's decision. Ethically, if a voted item is important enough to continue disagreement for an individual (or group of individuals) against the PAC direction, they should consider resigning or "stepping down". Occasionally, there may be an individual who is unable to recognize when this is happening. Having clear policy in place may help the PAC to address the concern and request the individual to step down – if there is no other recourse.



J. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – WHY IS THIS NECESSARY?

- Parent Councils will often make it a priority to ensure that individuals and/or the whole group receive additional training and development in order to be educated and prepared to do the job(s) being asked of them. Members of the PAC come from a variety of experiences - which may or may not include governance of a non-profit - and as such, often need assistance to understand their role in a school community.
- Other forms of professional development for parents and PAC members to be considered might also include having experts attend meetings to speak to parents about such topics as school safety, policies and curriculum, and how to support learning from home. The possibilities are endless!

Question - Spending Funds on the PAC - Is it okay?

Yes, but make sure to discuss it as a group and explore what benefits the PAC will experience. Follow your constitution guidelines regarding motions for expenditures and check your decision against the Universal Code of Conduct.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULES

Over the years MAPC has drawn on the skills and expertise of its board members and staff to create modules that deal with a variety of topics of interest to our members.



MAPC provides in person presentations to our member PACs to aid in their professional development as parent representatives in the various school divisions that have member PACs.

Modules have been created to meet the expressed needs of our members and include: *Roles and Responsibilities of Parent Advisory Councils; Parent Volunteers – Getting Them to Sign on, Show up and Stay Engaged; What is MAPC...and Why Should Parents and Education Partners Support it?; Effective Meetings for Parent Advisory Councils.*



FUTURE PLANS INCLUDE; CONSTITUTIONS, FINANCIALS AND FUNDRAISING TO NAME A FEW!

Modules are available to all MAPC members upon request. We will have a board director or MAPC volunteer come to your PAC to provide this training and guidance to your members. MAPC may also be available to come to your AGM to assist with elections as an impartial observer.



SECTION 3: FINANCIALS AND FUNDRAISING

“Manitoba Association of Parent Councils strongly requests all school division teams in Manitoba to work in consultation with its parents to review, create, and further develop clear and effective divisional guidelines regarding management of funds by a Parent Advisory Council, as outlined within the Advisory Councils for School Leadership Regulation and the Policy on School Generated Funds”.

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/schfundpolicy.html>

“I’ve recently taken over as Treasurer for our Parent Council and I am terrified that I’m going to make a mistake - help!”

A. FINANCIALS

Many people are intimidated by the thought of responsibility for finances other than their own. The best way to help ease the stress is to familiarize yourself with the process required. First, does your PAC have a job description for the position? Does your school or division have requirements which need to be considered for financial reporting with PACs? Will your PAC support professional development learning opportunities for you? Does your PAC require annual audits for its financials?

Second, if there is a clear reporting system in place—use it! If not—or if it needs updating—develop one in consultation with your PAC, School Administrator, and School Division. (Your school division contact would most likely be the Secretary-Treasurer or School Business Official).

Always remember, all governance groups are bound by the Duty of Loyalty, Duty of Care and Duty of Obedience. If you can demonstrate that you have acted in the best interests of all three, you will be fine.

Relax and enjoy the experience! Do your best and contact MAPC with any additional questions you may have.

“If a school partnership council has financial responsibility, it needs to establish a process for record-keeping and budgeting. This process must comply with school division policies and procedures.”

(Manitoba Education: School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities: 2005)



FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Your PAC has the ability to fundraise and secure funding for projects or events to support your school. It is very important that you understand the responsibilities you would have in order to do this and to account for those funds and/or purchases or costs. Being accountable to your membership (the administration and parents/families of your school community) includes ensuring that funds are spent for their intended purpose and financial reporting is accurate, which protects both the group and the individual responsible for financial record keeping. This also demonstrates a need for frequent and open communication to your school community.

It is very important to understand and comply with your division's policies in regards to financial policies, budgeting, and reporting – where they exist.

ROLE OF THE TREASURER

The role of the Treasurer should be outlined within your constitution. Typically, the treasurer is:

- One of the designated signing authorities for all PAC related banking matters
- Responsible for maintaining accurate records (such as a ledger or electronic bookkeeping) for all financial transactions including recording and filing receipts, cheques, and deposits
- Responsible for creating and providing a financial report at PAC meetings
- Available to assist with creating a PAC budget on an annual basis

BUDGETS

Budgets should be kept simple to ensure clear understanding to the wide variety of people involved with the PAC. They consist of funds coming into the PAC and funds being spent by the PAC which support school based events and projects. They are created and approved by the PAC – with input from the Treasurer - and maintained by the Treasurer with an update provided at each PAC meeting.

SEE APPENDICES: [Sample Annual Budget](#)

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Financial reports are created to ensure that the PAC understands its financials and what it is fundraising for. These reports should be made available in written form although some PACs may choose to have them available



as both a written and accompanying verbal report. Remember, the entire PAC is responsible to understand its financials. If you have a question – ask!

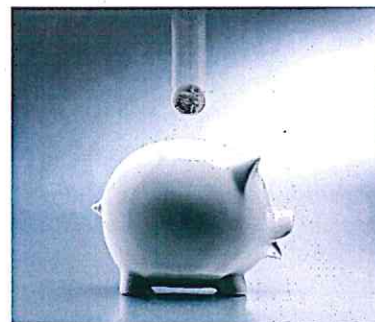
SEE APPENDICES: [Sample Treasurer's Report](#)

AUDITS OR REVIEWS

PACs will often conduct an audit or financial review annually to identify where monies are being held, reconcile accounts (i.e. make sure they balance) and to prove that monies were used appropriately. Check with your division whether it requires an annual audit for PACs in the division and whether it can provide assistance to PACs to coordinate one.

ACCOUNTS AND SIGNING AUTHORITY

Some PACs have an account set up through the school. Others have their own account set up in a local bank or credit union. Good accounting practices suggest that there be three signers on the account with any two signers being necessary to sign any cheque or to remove funds. An important tip to remember – ensure that signing authorities and process is included in your constitution. Typically, those signers would (or could) be the Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. MAPC does not recommend having a school staff member as a signer, but recognizes that it is a local decision. Check with your school division about any policies it may have to address signers.



ALLOCATING FUNDS

PACs are not revenue generating groups. They do not fundraise just to raise money. They fundraise for specific projects, events or use. When PACs consider various projects, they determine which will be supported through fundraising or soliciting donations and then, those funds are given directly to that project and cannot be spent on any other. If there are surplus funds after a project is completed, the PAC can decide where to reassign those funds (eg. to the lunch program or to purchase books for the school library). This reassignment of funds must be communicated to the school community.



CORRESPONDING MOTIONS/APPROVALS

Anytime funds are spent, there should be a corresponding motion within the meeting minutes, giving the PAC authority to do so (the Treasurer is normally the person responsible for making this motion). This demonstrates that the PAC members followed an approved process to make a financial decision about monies raised in the school community and they were allocated to an approved project or event.

CHARITABLE TAX RECEIPTS

Most school divisions have the ability to offer charitable tax receipts to individuals or businesses donating money to a school or PAC project. PACs should contact their local school divisions for more information.

B. PROJECT PLANNING

WHERE DO WE START? ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY'S NEEDS!

In consultation with your PAC, school administration, and parents, look around your school and the surrounding community to see what needs and opportunities exist that would be of interest to the PAC to support. Consider your community and what capacity it has – or challenges it is facing – to determine whether the goal is a reasonable one. Ask yourself whether this project will help to promote access and equity within your community? What is the school and school division's responsibility if this project is undertaken?

SET UP A TIMELINE

Determine a reasonable amount of time to accomplish your goal by examining items such as fundraising capabilities, school preparations that need to be considered in advance, volunteer resource capabilities, and of course the school year itself with all important dates, events and other considerations which are unique to your community.

SET UP A BUDGET, IF THE PROJECT IS GOING TO NEED FINANCES

Determine whether fundraising will be the only way to finance the project, or will you be applying for grants and other revenue sources? Do you have the experience and capability to do so? Is a separate account required? What records or reporting will be required by the PAC as well as school division?



ENLIST A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS OR A COMMITTEE TO MANAGE AND ASSIST WITH THE PROJECT

Set up a Terms of Reference for the group to work under and open the opportunity to the community in addition to your PAC. Determine who needs to be on this committee, in addition to who wants to be on it. You never know what talent or experience someone may have that you never knew about!

Remember – the PAC Chair is considered an ex-officio of each committee, due to the nature of their position. However, their attendance may be optional.

Creating excitement!

It isn't always easy to do, but having a well thought out case about the benefits to the school and community usually helps. Take the time to consider all the potential concerns and how they might be addressed. Give your community the chance to voice its support – or concerns – about the project, maybe through a community forum or a survey. There may be some points that were never thought about that may need to be seriously considered in advance of starting your project. (Better in advance rather than too late!) Have you spoken with your school administrator and teaching staff to see what their thoughts and concerns might be? Were the students involved in the decision making whenever it was appropriate to do so? Did you assess what amount of work parents and volunteers are willing and able to do to support the project's development? Have you spoken to the school division to determine that the project will follow divisional guidelines or process which may be required?

C. GRANTS AND PROPOSALS

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

Speak with your school division in advance of starting any grant proposals to know what they may require you to know in advance. Often, school divisions may have specific, approved vendors, safety and insurance considerations, or ownership and maintenance guidelines that must be considered for items such as playground development and other large scale projects. It's also an opportunity for you to discover what supports they may provide to assist your PAC with reaching its' goals. Some of these supports may include divisional liaisons and other contacts or use of the divisional charitable status number (as a non-profit within the school division).





D. SHORT AND LONG TERM PLANNING



Fundraising projects are only one way that PACs might participate in making their school communities stronger. By setting goals based on both short and long term plans, groups often find it easier to plan their activities accordingly.

Some ideas of short term plans might include, but are not limited to items such as:

- developing job descriptions for PAC members to better understand their role and responsibility to the PAC
- planning an event
- creating a database
- meeting the local school trustees
- working on a constitution
- creating an information brochure or presentation for parents new to the school

Some long term plans might include, but are not limited to:

- increasing attendance at PAC meetings
- increasing representation from diverse groups living and working in your school community
- succession planning for key roles on the council
- contributing to, or supporting the school and division plan



SECTION 4: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CONSTITUTIONS:

DO WE REALLY NEED A CONSTITUTION?

It is a benefit to have a document which acts as the foundation for a PAC and states why it exists and who it is there for. It also helps to guide the decision making process and outlines how the PAC conducts its business in an ethical manner.

WE HAVE NEVER HAD A CONSTITUTION. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO GET ONE IN PLACE?

There are many templates for constitutions available.

- Use the templates provided in this guide, or ask for a copy of a constitution from a PAC in a school with similar needs to yours. Go through the constitution line by line to make it your own.
- Select a date for an annual general meeting (AGM), make sure it is well advertised and then adopt the constitution as your own at that first meeting of the PAC. (See constitutions)

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO SOMETHING WRONG AND GO AGAINST WHAT IS IN OUR CONSTITUTION?

Be assured that there are no constitution police and that mistakes will be made and can be corrected just as easily. The key is to acknowledge that a mistake was made, to explain how or why the mistake was made, and what steps are being taken to correct the mistake. MAPC can provide guidance and advice to a PAC when requested.

OUR CONSTITUTION HASN'T BEEN TOUCHED SINCE ITS CREATION. HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE UPDATE IT?

Reviewing a constitution should be done on a regular basis in order to ensure that it still meets the needs of a PAC. It can take as little time as giving it an annual quick review to ensure that it is still current and relevant to your group, or can become a larger project where a dedicated group or individual identifies specific items needed to address or update a topic more appropriately.

WHY CAN THE CONSTITUTION ONLY BE CHANGED AT THE AGM?

The AGM is the one time that all members have the ability to meet and make decisions on the constitution, which is the foundation document that governs the PAC.



WHAT IS QUORUM AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Quorum is the minimum number of voting members needed to vote on matters of the PAC. Quorum is set so that the group has the ability to make decisions and conduct its business in an ethical and transparent manner. Quorum is typically set at 50% plus one voting member (e.g. Quorum for 10 voting members would be 6 members). You cannot have partial numbers, so round up to the next nearest number.

AREN'T ALL PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM A PART OF THE PAC?

Yes. All parents in a school community are considered to be members of the PAC. However, your constitution should outline who is a voting member at the PAC meetings (see Voting, Actions, and Motions)

WHY SHOULDN'T THE PRINCIPAL OR TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE HAVE A VOTE?

They do not normally hold a vote as they are considered advisors and/or representatives of the school (ex-officio). It may be perceived as a conflict of interest or being in a position of undue influence during a vote, so MAPC recommends they do not vote to avoid potential problems. (See Voting, Actions, and Motions)

WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE PAC MEETING?

For quorum, there must be the minimum number of people stated within your constitution. Otherwise, your PAC meetings should include: parents, the school principal (or designate), a teacher representative, a school trustee, and community and student representatives (when applicable).

WHY ARE THERE A MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM NUMBER OF VOTING MEMBERS ON THE PAC?

There are minimum and maximum voting numbers so the PAC can remain active while conducting its business in an efficient manner.

CAN WE ADD MORE VOTING MEMBERS?

More members can be added with a constitutional amendment at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). During the year, more members can be added only if a vacancy opens up among the current voting members (i.e. someone needs to step off the PAC, leaving a spot vacant) A PAC cannot add voting members during a term to fill spots to the maximum number indicated within the constitution.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO IF WE DON'T ALL AGREE TO AN INTERPRETATION WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION?

Constitutions can sometimes be difficult to interpret when information is not clear and concise. The first step is to come to an agreement as to what the basic principle of the item of concern is. The second step is to work towards an agreement and a resolution to the concern as cooperatively as possible, with input from all members of the PAC. The third step is to fix the problem by amending the constitution before your next AGM so it can be presented to members. It is important for everyone involved to understand that you are working towards a resolution which will satisfy the need – even if it is not 100% of what is desired. MAPC is a great resource to