

- Include students.
- Send out list of PAC activities to have parents sign up for – fundraising and other, field trip drivers, etc.
- Suggestion box .
- Use parents on committees and in other ways, for those who can't make it to meetings.
- School calendar contain blocks, everything that is happening, FSA, drama events, concerts, PAC meeting information. Every family is mailed one at start of school year.
- COMMUNICATION!
- Focus on issues, follow-up and updating.
- Potluck for Annual General Meeting.

# CONTAGIOUS ENTHUSIASM: How to get Parents Involved

At a past Leadership Conference a breakfast meeting took place and the discussion centered on sharing ways to get more parents involved. PACs from Kindergarten to high school had some really terrific ideas. Give a couple a try and see if they work!

- Morning coffee get-togethers with input then taken to PAC meetings.
- Every parent that attends a PAC meeting is asked for their email address, are sent reminders of meetings, important notices.
- Get email addresses of parents from registrations at the school; make parents aware that this will be given to PAC.
- Put an email address column, along with name and school, on meeting attendee lists.
- Parents registering Kindergarten students are invited to a PAC sponsored school barbeque.
- Everyone attending a PAC meeting is requested to bring a friend to the next meeting – every month.
- In June, Grade 7's coming to Jr. High are invited to the school and parents are invited to last two PAC meetings of year.
- Auto-phone out to all parents.
- School Reader board advertises PAC meetings.
- Sandwich boards on road noting "PAC Meeting Tonight".
- Phone committee, same callers to each list – become friends.
- Draw for dinner-for-two for attendees.
- PAC President speaks at feeder school visits to school.
- Free babysitting (Gr. 6 & 7's with babysitting certificates) or pay them with free lunch at hot dog or pizza day or money paid for babysitting – ½ to Student Voice.
- Coffee and goodies!
- FOOD
- Assure you will share information via phone calls, emails and not use it to solicit support for fundraising.
- Breakfast meeting for two DPAC meetings per year, no agenda, encourages dialogue.
- Have a time limit for meetings and stick to it – always start on time and end on time.
- Every parent who attends a PAC meeting is given a ticket for a draw for front row seats to the Christmas Concert.
- Small incentive prizes for attendance, drawn at start of meeting to encourage EARLY attendance.
- Chair picks up non-attendees and takes them to Tim Horton's on route to meeting
- Rotate each month between morning and evening meetings.
- Strategies to get people to introduce themselves, game to see who remembers the most names.
- Education questions on the agenda.
- Guest speakers.
- Parent Information 15 minutes at start of every meeting.
- Have the teachers share at a meeting what the PAC \$\$ have been used for; bring in displays, students, etc.
- PAC website (i.e. myfamily.com – notification goes to those with password, of each new item on site).
- Fundraising committee rather than taking up so much time at meetings.

- speculative, “what do you think parents will think of...?” If your PAC hasn’t discussed the issue, say so, rather than taking a chance of only giving your opinion, instead of being representative.
- asking for your personal opinion, “what do you think about...?” Reply, “As the spokesperson for the PAC, I can tell you that parents believe...”

A reporter is likely to ask the same question several times. Keep your tone consistent. Repeat earlier answers or key messages patiently. Do not use phrases such as: “as I said before...” or like I said...” or “again...”

Try using one of these phrases to bridge from your answer to their question to your message:

- “...what’s really important here is...”
- “...the public needs to know that...”
- “...the bottom line here is...”
- Avoid “however”, “but” and “in addition”

Be good to reporters – they need you AND your PAC can use a positive relationship to enhance your work through free publicity. Be cooperative, polite and return calls promptly. Get your message across clearly – and good luck!

## Media Wise – Don't Be a “Deer” in the Headlights

Make your contact with the media positive, professional and productive

Here are some tips for when a reporter calls you, the chairperson of your Parent Advisory Council. Ideas to help you get your message across and, hopefully, be quoted correctly!

When a reporter first calls, ensure you find out their name and whom they are with. Ask also:

1. **What is the story and angle you are working on?** This could help you make relevant comments and prevent a big surprise when the article is printed, different from the context you commented on.
2. **Who else are you going to interview?** This can give you a clearer understanding of the context.
3. **What do you know about this issue?** You may have to fine them background information.
4. **What is your deadline?** So you are not answering “under the gun”.

Buy yourself some time – always tell them that you will call them back (in no less than 15 minutes). Use the time to think, make notes, or talk to another PAC executive for ideas.

Anticipate questions, write them out and script your answers. Write key messages – your agenda. Underline certain words to help you remember the main points. Be concise, quotable, conversational, and easy to understand, and free of jargon.

Reporters are often looking for a 20-second “sound bite”; your comments will be edited, clipped and reorganized. In most interviews, the reporter’s question is not printed or aired and as a result your comments will read like a statement and not like the answer to the question.

1. Don't say anything you don't want to see on the front page. **There is no such thing as “off the record”.**
2. Keep your comments concise and controlled; don't ramble. When you have finished saying what you want to say, STOP talking. Don't let a pregnant pause cause you to keep going.
3. Personal opinions are dangerous ground. Don't use “I”, respond on behalf of your PAC, “Our parents believe...”
4. Don't day “no comment” – it may feel like a slap in the face to a reporter.

Reporters are good at asking many different types of questions. Some are:

- straightforward, “How long have you been involved in the PAC at this school?”
- open-ended, “tell me about the program”.
- to bait you, “do you agree this is just another cash cow?” Use a key message or repeat a previous answer rather than answering yes or no.
- asking you to speak for others, “what do you think the (principal, teachers, school board) will say about...?” A good answer could be “I can only speak on behalf of the PAC and parents have said...”

## **Can Parent Advisory Councils be Involved in District Policy Development?**

The Board believes that policies should be developed in consultation with those who will be impacted by them, including Parent Advisory Councils. Affecting change through policy is just one way Parent Advisory Councils can advise the board on matters relating to the improvement of the quality of education and the well being of students in our district schools.

### **How Can Parent Advisory Councils Provide Feedback on Policy Development?**

- Check your PAC mailbox after each board meeting for information on the policies available for feedback. After first reading has taken place at the Regular Board meeting, the policies that are up for adoption, are sent to all of the interest groups.
- Add Policy Feedback as a regular agenda item to your monthly PAC meetings.
- Set aside time each meeting to discuss the policies in questions. Set up a specific time to discuss the policies, maybe for a certain time period before the regular PAC meeting or after if it isn't possible to do so at the meeting or strike a standing committee to address the policies that arise throughout the school year.
- If you have any questions or do not understand portions of the policy, please talk to your principal. They will be more than willing to help you interpret and understand the policy(s) in question.
- The board welcomes and will consider all feedback that they receive on the policies. The Policy Committee would like to hear what you think of the policy, what would you change and why, what do you think needs to be added or deleted and why. They would even like to hear that you are satisfied with the policy as it has been brought forth. Send your written feedback to the Policy Committee c/o the Superintendent. The policy committee meets monthly on the last Monday of the month to discuss the policies and the feedback they receive.

Policies determine how our district will operate and PACs have the opportunity to provide advice to the board through this process. DPAC would like to encourage PACs to take the time, in their meetings, to begin to address policies that come to them for feedback.

# School District Policy Development in SD 6 and the Role of PAC

School boards have a duty to govern districts and their schools in accordance with specified powers in a fiscally responsible and cost effective manner. Among the significant roles of a school board is the development of clear policies to guide the operation of the School District and that the policies reflect the aspirations of the community and are consistent with overall provincial guidelines. The administrative staff of the school district has the responsibility to implement the policies.

The policies of SD 6, Rocky Mountain are guidelines adopted by the Board to chart a course of action. They tell what is wanted and may also include why and how much. They should be broad enough to permit discretionary action by the administration in meeting day-to-day problems, yet be specific enough to give clear guidance.

## How is Policy Developed in SD6, Rocky Mountain?

Suggestions for new policies or modifications to existing policies are brought to the board by interested parties through the Superintendent after they have been screened to make sure they are appropriate and are District-wide in focus. The policy in question is then reviewed by the Policy Committee which consists of three Trustees, the Superintendent and, if necessary, one or more officers of the Board.

## How is Policy Adopted in SD6, Rocky Mountain?

At a Regular Board meeting, the Superintendent of Schools shall submit proposed new policy or revisions to existing policy to the Board of Trustees for its consideration. The policy shall be introduced for the first time and amended where necessary, or be deleted. This is the first reading.

After being accepted in principle at a board meeting the policy shall be circulated to appropriate interest groups including **Parent Advisory Councils** in order to encourage feedback.

The Board shall consider further amendments to the policy during second and third (final) readings at the next subsequent Regular Board meetings, provided they are more than three weeks apart. Policies not approved will be referred back to the Policy Committee for subsequent amendment, consultation or deletion.

For more information on policy development in our district, we encourage you to check out Policy No. 1100, Policy Development in our District Policy Manual. Each school has a copy of this manual. Check with your principal to find out where the manual is kept in your school.

# Year-end Evaluation

At the end of the year, it is important to assess how well the Parent Advisory Council accomplished the goals it set at the beginning of the year. Was too much taken on? Could more have been accomplished? A year-end evaluation will assist in goal-setting for the following year.

It is a good idea for the PAC to spend a significant part of its final meeting of the year in conducting an evaluation of its activities.

Send notice to all parents asking them to attend and to bring their ideas and suggestions for next year.

## **Review your annual plan and priorities:**

- Did you have an impact in advising the school principal and staff on school programs?
- What issues did you inform parents about during the year?
- Which parent education programs were successful? Which had difficulties?
- Which school activities were successful? Which had difficulties?
- Did you accomplish the objectives which you defined as your priorities for the year?
- Ask each committee chairperson or person with specific responsibilities to submit a report describing their activities. Ask them to identify what was successful and where they had difficulties. Make sure they are publicly thanked for their efforts!

The president should prepare a written report describing the year's activities, thanking various people and identifying general success and difficulties.

Ask the school principal and staff representative to comment on the work of the PAC and to offer suggestions for the next year.

As you discuss various reports and suggestions, prepare a list of ideas and suggestions for next year on a large chart.

Have people write their name and address and area of interest on an attendance list. Use that list to identify potential committee chairs or executive members.

# Parent Education Programs

Programs which inform parents about your school or education in general are a key component to the development of your PAC.

Some of the programs you can organize are as follows:

- Invite speakers to evening sessions.
- Hold activities and events to coincide with parent-teacher interviews.
- Arrange special mailings to all parents explaining current education issues.
- Work in collaboration with community groups concerned with a particular issue.
- Invite the chairperson of the school board to speak at a PAC Meeting.
- Show a video on a particular educational topic.
- Organize workshops or conferences.
- Host open houses or evening sessions to explain school programs.

Sources of ideas for such programs include:

- Suggestions from parents at a general meeting.
- Questionnaires sent to parents.
- Random telephone surveys to determine current parents concerns.
- BCCPAC
- DPAC
- Your school principal.

From the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils – Leadership Manual

# Annual Plan and Priorities

It is very important that your PAC have an annual plan and a limited number of priorities. It need only be an outline on one page. Here are some basic steps to consider before the start of each year.

1. Brainstorm about the coming year in order to identify:
  1. Issues of concern to parents
  2. Areas where parents could invest in their own education, e.g. leadership workshops, parenting skills, safety issues, etc.
  3. A calendar of events
  4. Areas of interest and willingness of PAC members to undertake certain projects or activities
  5. Potential areas of support, or opposition, to PAC goals, objectives or projects.
2. Priorize the above list as goals to accomplish in the coming year.
3. Develop the annual plan. Your PAC's plan could look like this:
  1. We will improve communication with parents.
  2. We will advise the principal and school staff of issues identified.
  3. We will assist parents in understanding any new and used programs.
  4. We will familiarize ourselves with district issues.
4. Put actions and timelines to the above goals.
  1. Develop a monthly newsletter, hold monthly evening meetings, and create an e-mail list of parents.  
ACTION: Communications Committee or (name of volunteer) by October 31.
  2. Investigate the issues and develop strategies for resolving them, e.g. have a parent representative attend staff meeting.  
ACTION: PAC Executive by November 15.
  3. Sponsor an evening information session, facilitated by a qualified presenter.  
ACTION: Two volunteers
  4. Appoint at the next executive meeting a representative to attend DPAC meetings.  
ACTION: Executive

These actions could be recorded on an Action Form, similar to that shown in the Inclusive PACs and DPACs – Plan for Action. Also see Year-end Evaluations for more information.

# Committees

One of the factors that contribute to the success of any voluntary organization is the effectiveness of its committees. The advantages of committees are:

- Meetings are smaller and less formal
- Committee members are often chosen for their expertise and/or enthusiasm
- There is more time for discussion

There are two basic types of committees:

1. **STANDING Committees:** These exist every year and are usually described in the Constitution and Bylaws. They usually include Finance, Budget, Nominations and Resolutions.
2. **AD-HOC Committees:** Committees that are created for a specific task or area of responsibility, and are disbanded once the final report has been given.

Committees, when necessary and in accordance with your bylaws, may be appointed either by your members or your executive, to suit the PAC's needs. You will need to ensure that each committee has a chairperson and a clear plan (i.e. projects, timetables and descriptions of who is responsible for the work). Any limits on the nature of the committee's decision-making should be clearly stated in writing. The mandate and plans of each committee should be reviewed by your PAC executive at the beginning of the year, and any recommendations taken to a general meeting.

Committees, through the committee chairperson, should report to your PAC Executive. A reporting schedule should be part of the committee's mandate. Each committee member should have a job to do as part of the committee's work, and should report to the committee chair. It is preferable that all reports be in writing. They do not need to be long, but should include any recommendations that will need to be discussed by the PAC's general membership. Each committee should submit a year-end report for the annual general meeting.

8. The PAC chair has a vote (unless your bylaws state otherwise). The DPAC chair or other DPAC executive members may cast a vote only if representing their school's PAC (unless your bylaws state otherwise).
9. At larger meetings, the chair must remain impartial. Keep the dialogue among all group members, not between the chair and one or two member.
10. If people tend to dominate the **discussion**, suggest making a rule that a parent may only speak twice on an issue, the second time after everyone else has had a chance to speak once.
11. Focus on the issue, not on a person or behaviour. Encourage contributions from all members; ask open-ended, non-threatening questions; recognize positive participation; and protect people's ideas.
12. If someone speaks out of order (barges in), a point of order should be raised because the current speaker's rights are being infringed.
13. Rules of **decorum**:
  - Remarks must be confined to the pending motion.
  - Members must remain courteous and avoid personal attacks.
  - In formal meetings, remarks are directed "through the chair".
  - Use the power of the majority whenever you can. Ask the group.
14. Of the secondary motions in Robert's Rules, it is suggested that only three be used; amend a motion; refer it to a committee; or postpone it (to a definite time). Do not use tabling (kills the motion) or postponing indefinitely.

# Simplified Rules of Order

**Rules of order** are intended to facilitate progress, not impede it. They are designed to include members in decision-making, with everyone having an equal opportunity to participate in the discussion and influence the group's decisions. Use common sense; think "fair, reasonable and responsible".

The bylaw of many PACs and other organizations state that they use Robert's Rules when their bylaws are silent on an issue. However, Robert's Rules are often more complex than necessary. You may use any procedure you wish – even create your own.

Think of parliamentary procedure like table manners; a certain amount is required for an orderly meal; formal dinners use more manners than suppers in the kitchen.

## Quick facts on Robert's Rules and other common sense tips:

1. Adoption of a motion requires a **majority** in favour; therefore, a tie vote means the motion is defeated.
2. **Quorum** is stated in your bylaws. The number chosen should be how many parents can reasonably be depended upon to attend any one meeting. A quorum must be present throughout the entire meeting to conduct business. Quorum cannot be suspended – it would violate the rights of those not present.
3. Steps in handling a motion:
  1. A member makes the motion [I move that...]
  2. Another seconds [I second the motion.]
  3. The chair states the motion [It is moved and seconded that...]
  4. Debate and possibly amendment takes place.
  5. The chair puts the motion to a vote [We are now voting on the motion to... All in favour? All opposed? The motion is Carried/Defeated.]
  6. The chair announces results [The motion is Carried/Defeated.]
4. Be clear about what is being voted on and make sure everyone knows you are **taking the vote**. Reread the motion before voting. Introduce plain language. Instead of "calling the question", say "Let's take a vote".
5. Three things are important to record in the minutes: the exact wording of the motion, that discussion took place, and the final outcome (carried/defeated).
6. The person **seconding** a motion does not have to be in favour of it; they just want it discussed. In a small assembly (less than 12) seconding is not required.
7. If you make a motion, you can't speak against it, but you can vote against it. You *can* change your mind after hearing discussion.

- Pay attention to the speakers. Do not let your attention wander.
- If a procedural matter arises and you are not sure how to resolve it, *never* try to bluff! Call a brief recess and consult a rulebook.
- Make sure you know the Constitution and Bylaws of your organization.
- Provide leadership for the meeting, keep order but don't be on a power trip. The rest of the members are counting on you.
- Remain impartial and do not engage in debate.
- Pay particular attention to time – the length of time an individual has spoken, the amount of time spent on an item of business, and the approaching time of adjournment.

From the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils – Leadership Manual

# Effective Meetings

The basic purpose of any meeting is to conduct business in a fair and orderly manner. Everyone must feel that they have a chance to voice their opinions and that the decisions made reflect the will of the majority.

Chairing a meeting is not difficult, but it does take a *little* preparation, a *little* confidence and a *lot* of common sense. Use your Bylaws to guide you. For more information on rules of order, see – Simplified Rules of Order.

Your job as chair is to:

- Start the meeting on time.
- Stick firmly to the agenda.
- Allow only one person to speak at a time.
- Require everyone to speak in turn by raising their hand. Take speakers in order (using a speakers list if necessary).
- Keep the discussion on topic. Steer it back quickly when it drifts.
- Rule on procedural questions
- End on time.

And through it all:

- Be friendly and polite.
- Radiate enthusiasm – if you don't who will?
- Keep your sense of humour!

A meeting that is *welcoming* can pay off with increased attendance:

- Have a "greeter" at the door.
- Introduce new members.
- Begin the meeting by welcoming everyone.
- Keep meeting short, two hours at most. *End On Time*.
- Phone first-time members afterwards. Thank them for coming and ask them how they enjoyed it.

A final word of caution...

One of the basic principles of chairing a meeting is: *conduct, don't control*. Take part in the discussion but don't dominate. Your views should not carry any more weight than anyone else's.

## HELPFUL REMINDERS

- Always be prepared.
- Start the meeting on time.
- You are there to conduct the meeting, not control it.
- Review procedure or process.
- Always read all motions out loud to the meeting, and again just before voting.
- During debate, keep track of those trying to get your attention – keep a speaker's list.

## Commonly Used Abbreviations

PAC	Parent Advisory Council
DPAC	District Parent Advisory Council
BCCPAC	BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Council
CHSF	Canadian Home & School Federation
SPC	School Planning Council
DA	District Associate

BCCT	BC College of Teachers
BCPSEA	BC Public School Employers' Association
BCPVPA	BC Principals and Vice-Principals Association
BCSDSTA	BC School District Secretary-Treasurers' Association
BCSSA	BC School Superintendents' Association
BCSTA	BC School Trustees' Association
BCTF	BC Teachers' Federation
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
MOE	Ministry of Education

EAC	Education Advisory Council
CASE	Council of Administrators for Special Education
CEA	Canadian Education Association
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
FISA	Federation of Independent Schools' Association
FNESC	First Nations Education Steering Committee
LATA	Learning Assistance Teachers' Association
BCLTA	BC Teacher-Librarians' Association
PEEPAC	Parent & Education Engagement Partnership Advisory Committee

AGM	Annual General Meeting
CAPP	Career and Personal Planning
EBS	Effective Behaviour Support
ESL	English as a Second Language
FSA	Foundation Skills Assessment
IDS	Independent Directed Studies
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IRP	Integrated Resource Package
PASBC	Post Secondary Application Service of BC
PEN	Personal Education Number
PLAP	Provincial Learning Assessment Program
PLN	Provincial Learning Network
RSA	Regional Specialist Association
SAIP	Student Assessment Indicators Program
SER	Student Educator Ratio
SLP	Student Learning Plan
TOC	Teacher on Call
YRS	Year Round Schooling

# District Parent Advisory Handbook

Rocky Mountain DPAC has also developed a DPAC Handbook full of resources. Each school in our district received a copy of the handbook in the fall of 2003. Please check with your PAC Executive for more information or contact DPAC.

This resource is divided into 5 subjects Contact Information and Important Dates, School Planning Councils, Advocacy, Resources and Useful Information, including:

- [Commonly Used Abbreviations](#)
- [Effective Meetings](#)
- [Simplified Rules of Order](#)
- [Committees](#)
- [Annual Plans and Priorities](#)
- [Parent Education Programs](#)
- [Year End Evaluation](#)
- [School District Policy Development in SD 6 and the Role of PAC](#)
- [Media Wise – Don't be a "Deer" in the Headlights](#)
- [Contagious Enthusiasm – How to get Parents Involved](#)

DPAC has also developed a number of brochures for your use:

- [Rocky Mountain District Parent Advisory Council](#)
- [Parent Advisory Councils](#)
- [School Planning Councils](#)
- [DPAC Advocacy Project](#)
- [Parent-Teacher Progress Interviews](#)
- [Parent Involvement](#)
- [Reading Tips for Parents](#)
- [Kindergarten: Learning...Life's Greatest Adventure!](#)