

# ***BASICS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL COUNCILS***



## ***ESSENTIAL TOOLS & PRACTICES FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING STRONG SCHOOL COUNCILS***



***"Remember, being a School Council member isn't about you and me,  
IT'S ALL ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR STUDENT LEARNING!"***



Training materials developed by the  
***Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees***  
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**This information has been compiled by the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees (AYSCBC), a registered non-profit organization that provides support, information and training to its members.**

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Alberta's Commission on Learning, *Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds. Report and Recommendations, October 2003*

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association, *School Council Resource Manual 2006*

Association of Alaska School Boards, *"The Most Important Question we can Ask--Is it Good for the Kids?"*

British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, *Leadership Manual for School & District Parent Advisory Councils 2001.*

British Columbia School Trustees Association, *Key Work Resources-Improving Student Achievement through Community Engagement. 2002*

National School Boards Association, *Becoming a Better Board Member, 1996*

Yukon Department of Education information for School Councils

**ESSENTIAL TOOLS & PRACTICES  
FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING STRONG SCHOOL COUNCILS**

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# On Being a School Council Member

**The most important question we can ask...  
“IS IT GOOD FOR KIDS?”**

To guide us in our work as School Council members:---

*There must be a dynamic shared vision for education that reflects student needs and community priorities. We demonstrate our commitment to the shared vision by using it to guide decision making.*

*We are involved in the development of long and short term plans that are annually revised through a process involving extensive participation, information gathering, research and reflection.*

*We encourage and support innovative approaches to teaching, learning and the continuous renewal of education.*

*We celebrate achievements of students and accomplishments of others who contribute to education.*

*We advocate for children and families and establish and maintain relationships with parents and other mentors to help support students.*

We support partnerships with individuals, groups and organizations to promote and expand the educational opportunities for ALL students while continually improving teamwork, problem solving and decision-making skills.

We perform in a fair and responsible manner for ALL students to promote School Council service as a meaningful way to make long term contributions to society.

We need to proactively identify and address issues affecting the education of ALL students.

We need to receive regular reports on student progress and needs based on a variety of assessments to evaluate the quality and equity of the educational program.

We need to evaluate our own performance in carrying out our responsibilities as a Council.



*Adapted with permission by the  
**Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees (AYSCBC)**  
from 'Board Standards - A Framework for Alaska School Boards' by the  
Association of Alaska School Boards*

## **MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A FULL TEAM**

School Council members are a critical part of the community's investment in and control of their children's learning environment. It is important to ensure that all seats on a Council are filled in order to be most effective in doing the work that needs to be done. A full team should allow the workload to be shared, and through good representation, the various points of view in the school community will be brought to the table.

Members who have served a term of office (2 years currently) should encourage others in their school community to consider putting their names forward for nomination and election when the time comes. This applies to all members, regardless of whether or not they are planning to run for office again. Also, during their term, members should invite others to attend meetings and to learn more about the role they play in education. And, if any seats become vacant during the term, outreach efforts should be made to let the school community know and to see that they are filled.

**It should be understood that all 'regular' seats are open to ALL eligible community members.**

*Refer to Section 86(1) and 82(1) Yukon Education Act 1990*

### **Guaranteed Representation**

In addition to 'Regular' seats (as they are referred to in the Yukon Education Act, 1990), many Yukon School Councils have some seats that are designated as only open to First Nation citizens. These are allocated under the section 68 'Guaranteed Representation' of the legislation noted above. Filling these seats is a negotiated process between the individual First Nations and the Minister of Education.

**“The first partners in the education system are parents.  
For children to succeed, parents must be  
actively and positively involved in the education of their children.  
Every school should have a school council that provides a strong voice  
and an effective vehicle for parents and community members to be actively involved  
in important decisions about their schools.”**

*from: Every Child Learns. Every Child Succeeds.  
Report and recommendations Alberta's Commission on Learning Oct 2003*

## **KNOW YOUR ROLE**

*(what follows on this page is the outcome of a School Council initiated work session in July 2000, focused on determining roles and responsibilities)*

### **Partners in Education:**

Education in the Yukon is a partnership between governments, educators, School Councils, Boards, Committees, parents, students and communities. Each partner has an important role to play - to be effective, the partners must collaborate. To understand the role of School Councils, Boards and Committees, it is necessary to understand the responsibilities of each partner.

### **THE GOVERNMENT**

The government is responsible for:

- establishing minimum levels of what students must know at each grade level and upon graduation
- establishing a uniform territory-wide base curriculum while allowing for some customization of options
- providing equitable funding so that expectations for students can be achieved, and
- establishing the accountability measures that will ensure expectations are achieved.

It is the government who accepts and maintains the responsibility for employing sufficient and capable staff, and for providing appropriate compensation and a fair and just work environment.

### **THE EDUCATORS**

School principals and staff are responsible for planning and delivering programs that will enable their students to meet or exceed acceptable levels of achievement. While operating within Department of Education policies, schools reflect and respond to the culture and priorities of their local communities. In addition, principals work in consultation with their staff, school councils, boards, committees, parents, students, and communities in reaching decisions.

## THE SCHOOL COUNCIL/ BOARD / COMMITTEE

*The goal of a School Council, Board or Committee is to enhance students' learning through the cooperative efforts of parents, students, educators, government and other members in the community.*

### **Roles of School Councils, Boards and Committees**

School Councils, Boards and Committees have four very important roles:

1. **Communication:** To establish and maintain good communications between the school, parents, students and the community;
2. **Participation:** To encourage parents, students and community members to participate in education and understand their roles in supporting student learning;
3. **Monitoring:** To monitor student learning and ensure that information is shared with parents in a meaningful way (i.e. accountability measures and reporting);
4. **Accountability:** To hold the department and school administration accountable for student learning outcomes.

*" Accountability is a means by which individuals or organizations take responsibility for their actions so that those who depend on them can be assured that there are some safeguards in place to encourage good practices and to prevent bad practices or abuses to have some course of redress for problems that arise, and to have some assurance of equitable and fair treatment. "*

--excerpt from: "Developing A Professional Model Of Accountability For Our Schools", by Linda Darling-Hammond. - Presented at the BC Teachers' Federation AGM, March 1999.

## **KNOW WHAT YOU CAN DO**

School Councils derive their authority and responsibilities from the Yukon Education Act and its attendant Regulations.

Refer to **Powers and Duties for School Councils** under **Section 113** of the Yukon Education Act (1990, revised 2002).

Re: **School Boards**, refer to **Section 116**.

In addition, according to the Yukon Education Act, under the Powers of the Minister, section 9—

**"The Minister may in writing delegate any power, duty or function conferred on the Minister by this Act to a School Board, a Council or to any employee of the department."** S.Y. 1989-90, c.25, s.9

There are also many other sections of the Education Act in addition to the above that are important for Council and Board members to be aware of in carrying out their responsibilities. See the following list for references to Sections in the Act.

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## REGULATIONS UNDER THE YUKON EDUCATION ACT

Regulations made under the Yukon Education Act are posted on the Yukon Government website on the following link:

[www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/legislation/page\\_e.html](http://www.gov.yk.ca/legislation/legislation/page_e.html) (copy and paste URL)

***NOTE:** To use the website, click on **Education Act** and it will trigger a drop down menu of **Regulations** and years.*

*Click on a year, and once again a menu of Regulations will drop down, scroll down to the Regulation you want to read, click on it and you should be able to open it to read the text.*

There are many Regulations that pertain to School Councils, school operations and school communities, for example:

- Student Transportation Regulations (O.I.C. 1991/69)
  - Payment to Members and Trustees Regulations (O.I.C. 1991/40)
  - Secretary-Treasurer Regulations (O.I.C. 1991/35)
- and others

## KNOW YOUR POLICIES

A policy is a statement of intent setting overall values and broad guidelines for action in a given area. Good policies create the stability, continuity and accountability that are essential for the efficient running of the education system. When a framework of clear policy exists, people know where they stand and what is expected of them, but also where they are going and what the overall aims and objectives of the system are. Good policies lead to predictable outcomes for everyone involved.

### Some Definitions

**Policy:** tends to direct, guide or govern; may be a pronouncement either encouraging or banning some activity. It is a general statement of the beliefs of the organization, and constitutes a basis for development and implementation of procedures.

**Procedures:** statements of who does what, how and in what sequence, may be mandatory or discretionary

**Regulation:** a rule, order, prescription, regulating principle, governing direction, or law (i.e., the regulations of a school)

**Guideline:** provides guidance relative to setting standards or determining a course of action—a rule or principle provides guidance

### **Effective policy** --

- is precise
- reflects the overall values of the school and community
- clearly defines the school system's goals and objectives
- is flexible and able to respond effectively to operational issues as they arise
- creates a shared understanding by clearly defining expectations, roles and responsibilities
- envisions and measures clear outcomes
- is written in plain language and easily understood

## **Policy Manual**

Every School Council should have a binder containing all policies and regulations, both Departmental as well as their School's, which pertain to carrying out their role in education. Departmental policies under the Yukon Education Act are posted on the website: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/legislation-and-policies.html>

Individual School policies should be posted on the school's website via:  
[www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/](http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/)

Council members have a role in developing, reviewing, modifying and implementing policies in a number of areas. Councils may also develop their own 'internal' policies to guide them in their operations. Policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are relevant, consistent and easy to understand.

**It is important for members to familiarize themselves with relevant policies. These provide clarification and direction on many issues that affect the school environment and student learning.**

### **APPROVED POLICIES for Public Schools (as of May 2014)**

#### **Section: Safe and Caring Schools**

Safe and Caring Schools

Safe and Caring Schools Support Plan

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

#### **Section: Health and Safety in Schools**

Administration of Medication to Students

Anaphylaxis

Mandatory Use of Helmets for School Sponsored Activities

Safe and Caring Schools

School Nutrition

School Sale of Home Prepared Food to the Public

Substance Abuse

Tobacco-Free Schools

Yukon Education Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol

Yukon Education Violence Threat Risk Assessment Signatory Document

### **Section: School Operations**

After-School Child Care Operations in Schools  
Agencies in the Schools  
Approval Guidelines for Projects, Presentations, Resources and Material in Yukon Schools  
Fundraising  
Inter-Schools Athletics  
Research in Schools  
School Closure  
School Growth Planning  
School Locker Use and Locker Searches  
Student Attendance  
Student Transportation On School Buses - Ridership Guidelines  
Student Transportation in Government Owned Vehicles  
Student Transportation in Government Owned Vehicles-Safe Work Practices  
Valedictorian  
Video Surveillance in Schools and on School Buses  
Volunteers in the Schools

### **Section: Off-Site Experiential Learning and Field Trip Application Forms**

Off-site Experiential Learning (Field Trip Policy)

### **Section: Accountability**

Education Appeal Tribunal Procedures and Operations  
Educational Use of Copyright-Protected Work  
Provision of Educational Programs  
School Council Dispute Resolution Procedure  
School Growth Planning  
Student Attendance

### **Section: Finance and Administration**

Student Accommodation and Boarding Allowances  
Student Accommodation and Boarding Allowances Procedures  
Student Boarding Allowance Application Form  
Student Boarding Allowance Policy Appendix 1-boarding allowance amount  
Student Boarding Allowance Policy Appendix 2-Grade Levels in Community Schools outside Whitehorse

## HOW TO DEVELOP POLICY

In general there are five steps involved in policy-making:

1. Initiation
2. Development
3. Refinement
4. Adoption & Implementation
5. Review & Evaluation.

### → **Step One: Initiation**

The need for a new policy can emerge from a number of different areas including:

- . a specific incident or issue
- . staff, teachers, students, parents or the community
- . new legislation
- . the creation of new programs
- . the elimination of programs or services

If it is decided that a policy should be developed and none exists, or there is one but it is no longer relevant, policy development begins.

### → **Step Two: Development**

At this stage, information is collected, alternatives are evaluated and a decision on overall policy direction is made.

Research and community engagement are two key activities that occur during this stage. Research should be conducted on the issue itself, community and stakeholder values and interests, policies that exist in other jurisdictions, and other available background information.

Soliciting public input is a key component of policy development and an effective way to collect information on their values, interests and ideas. Opportunities exist to involve the public in:

- . better understanding and defining the issues that affect student learning and achievement
- . identifying community values and interests
- . creating and evaluating alternatives
- . making the decision

### → Step Three: Refinement

During this stage, the draft policy is reviewed by a variety of stakeholders to ensure it is clear, meets the required objectives and has no unintended consequences.

A proposed policy may need to be reviewed by various parties including:

1. legal counsel to ensure it is within the Department's or Council's mandate and does not impose additional liabilities
2. human resources or labour relations to ensure it does not violate employee rights or the collective agreement
3. communications (or someone well-versed in this area) to ensure clarity
4. superintendent or staff to ensure it can be implemented.

Once the policy has been refined and reviewed it should be taken back to the community (or involved stakeholders) to ensure it accurately reflects what was agreed to in step two.

### → Step Four: Adoption and Implementation

The policy is formally adopted at the Department and/or Council level and forwarded to staff (if applicable) for implementation. Some things to consider when implementing policy include:

- . new regulations and procedures may be required to support the policy
- . new equipment/materials that may be required to support implementation
- . how to communicate policy details to affected groups
- . training (if required).

### → Step Five: Evaluation and Monitoring

It is important to monitor and evaluate policy implementation to ensure the policy is effective, achieves the desired outcome and does not create unintended problems or outcomes. A formal evaluation should compare the actions and outcomes of the policy against the original intent and objectives.

**SAMPLE POLICY DEVELOPMENT OUTLINE**

*Identifying areas where policy is needed or where revision is required*

**ISSUE:** *WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE?*

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**BACKGROUND:** *WHAT HISTORY IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING THIS PROBLEM OR ISSUE? (REFER TO OR ATTACH ANY PERTINENT DOCUMENTS)*

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**INVOLVEMENT:** *WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN FINDING A SOLUTION?*

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**ALTERNATIVES:** *WHAT ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS ARE THERE? WHAT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?*

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**EXISTING POLICY:** DOES THIS PROPOSED POLICY RELATED TO ANOTHER POLICY? REFERENCE

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**OPTIONS:** CAN THE SAME OUTCOME BE ACHIEVED THROUGH GUIDELINES, PROCEDURES OR OTHER MEANS? YES OR NO AND WHY?

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**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY:** IS THERE LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE AUTHORITY?

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**BUDGET:** ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS?

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### GOOD POLICY CHECKLIST

	YES	NO
1. enables people within the schools (Internal audiences) to understand clearly their responsibilities;	_____	_____
2. builds support and understanding among external audiences for what the schools intend to do and how they intend to achieve their goals;	_____	_____
3. saves time by clearly delineating areas of concern and the philosophies that should guide action;	_____	_____
4. not only guides action, but calls for action by establishing expectations which make it clear how people in the system should design plans for the future as well as responses to current incidents;	_____	_____
5. establishes responsibility and accountability and, as such, enables intelligent and consistent evaluation and review;	_____	_____
6. includes expressions of purpose and intent, thus ensuring that actions are consistent with general philosophy, goals, strategic directions, etc.;	_____	_____
7. addresses the needs of the future rather than the "tyranny of the moment";	_____	_____
8. provides continuity in a system to ensure that even if a governing body changes significantly, philosophy and broad goals/expectations will remain in place; and	_____	_____
9. deliberately takes the philosophical high ground and, by so doing, tends to enable organizations to avoid the potential pitfalls and chaos that can be caused by governing board division or serious personality conflicts.	_____	_____

## INGREDIENTS OF PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Effective meetings are critical to making effective decisions.

It is a good practice to set School Council meeting dates early in the year and to publicize them regularly. Extend an invitation to students as well as neighbouring schools and other members of the community.

It is important to ensure that:

1. The purpose for the meeting is clearly understood by all participants.
2. Those who need to be there are in attendance. A quorum (majority of Council members) must be in attendance for any act or proceeding to be valid.
3. There is an agenda sent out ahead of time and it is followed.
4. There is effective leadership. (*see below\**)
5. All members are prepared and participate.
6. Meetings start and end on time.
7. Sub-committees are set up to handle more involved issues and that most discussions take place at that level. Sub-committee members can come to School Council with clear recommendations for action.
8. There are outcomes reached through the process of the meeting.
9. Participants know what they are to do by way of follow-up and/or actions.
10. Accurate minutes are produced as the public record of the meeting.

In general, focus on supporting student success, don't let personal issues or the concerns of individuals dominate meetings.

## **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP—THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR/CO-CHAIRS**

*(note: some Councils choose to designate Co-Chairs. Whenever the term 'Chair' is used, it is to be understood that the application is for Co-Chairs as well)*

- The Chair is an important role in any meeting.
- More is expected of the Chair than any other member.
- The Chair can be seen as actually working for the Council.

With this in mind, the Chair does NOT make decisions for the Council, in fact the most important responsibility of the Chair is to ensure that all members have the information needed to assist the group in discussion and assist them in decision-making.

Chairs are not 'gate-keepers', but rather information gatherers and distributors. They need to establish and maintain a meeting environment that encourages and supports participation from all members.

The Chair needs to do whatever is possible for the ten points above\* to be in place during their term in the position of Chair.

The Chair is most often the 'point of contact' for the school administration and the Department of Education, HOWEVER some Councils delegate different members to be called depending on the reason for the contact. Once again, the importance of sharing information appropriately is paramount.

## **COMMITMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF ALL MEMBERS**

All members, whether elected, acclaimed or appointed need to fulfill their responsibilities as Council members as legislated in the Yukon Education Act.

There are expectations of members when they assume a seat. Their role in representing the interests of students, parents and other community members is an important one. They need to allocate time to do some background reading, to prepare for and attend meetings, not only the regular monthly ones but others that may be necessary from time to time to deal with specific issues. They need to be open to hearing from those they represent in their community and to be able to bring forward concerns when requested and appropriate. And carrying out follow-up actions, such as letter-writing, phoning, etc. may also be involved with some issues.

There are many rewards for being a committed Council member. For the time and effort people put into their positions as members, they can take satisfaction and a sense of being a valuable contributor to the school community and to the students it serves. And for the knowledge and skills they bring to the Council, based on living in the

community, they can experience growth from a personal and a community development view. On the 'celebration' front, there are school ceremonies and events at which Council members' participation is important. This may entail simple attendance, but may also occasionally involve speaking or otherwise assisting with the event. Of course, Councils can also organize and facilitate events, with the focus always being on school and community working together in the best interests of the students.

### **IT'S IMPORTANT TO WORK TOGETHER! TO DO IT WELL:--**

- ★ There is a shared understanding that the primary focus of all Council decisions must be supporting students to reach their full potential.
- ★ Everyone participates, not only the vocal ones.
- ★ Members ask questions-of parents, students, administration and staff, other community members, current and past members of other School Councils, Dept of Education staff, other organizations and even those in other jurisdictions...
- ★ People listen to each other's ideas and know their own ideas will also be heard.
- ★ Opposing viewpoints are allowed to co-exist in the room.
- ★ Members share the responsibilities and tasks of the group.
- ★ Any situation involving a conflict of interest (either perceived or real) is declared and appropriate action is taken.
- ★ Privileged information is treated confidentially as per the Oath of Non-Disclosure.
- ★ Members share the responsibility for Council decisions, regardless of how they voted as individuals.
- ★ People include a sense of humour in their work together.
- ★ Overall, honesty, fairness and integrity guide Council operations.

## THE PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING

There can be many influences on the decisions to be made by Councils. Past experiences, personal biases and political needs are a few. In order to balance these influences, it is important that Councils have rational decision-making procedures.

The following steps can help in the process of decision-making:--

1. Define the problem
2. Gather information
3. Consider the alternatives
4. Forecast the consequences
5. Check proposed decisions against values, goals and mission

Questions to ask:

- Will the decision be in harmony with the vision, mission, goals and objectives of the school?
- Will this decision promote good education?

6. Decide, determine, settle, conclude, resolve

When it is time to end debate and vote, some general rules to abide by are:

- Be as fully informed as possible. Share what you've learned and listen attentively to the information provided by the others.
- Vote on conviction, not on emotion. If the debate was heated, put aside personal feelings and base your vote on **what's best for students**.
- Because there are several sides to every issue, you are not going to please everyone. Do your homework and make the decision you think is right.
- When your colleagues vote in opposition to your vote, keep in mind: "individual choice, mutual respect".
- Once the majority has made a decision, even if you weren't in the majority, stick by it.

### Major causes of poor decisions:

1. Framing the wrong question
2. Not taking enough time
3. Acting on poor information
4. Acting under pressure
5. Letting emotions get out of hand
6. Failing to consider consequences
7. Failing to admit mistakes or adjust to changing circumstances

## 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".

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

1. Adoption of a motion requires a **majority** in favour; in the case of a tie, the vote of the Chair shall be the determining vote.
2. **Quorum** refers to the majority of the Council.
3. A quorum must be present at Council meetings in order for acts and proceedings made during the meeting to be valid and/or binding.
4. Steps in handling a **motion** are:
  - a) a member makes the motion (I move that we....)
  - b) another seconds the motion (I second the motion....)
  - c) The Chair states the motion (It is moved and seconded that...)
  - d) Debate and possibly amendment take place.
  - e) 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.)
  - f) The Chair announces the result (The motion is carried/defeated.)
5. Be clear about what is being voted on. Reread the motion before voting.
6. Three things are important to **record in the minutes**: the exact wording of the motion, that discussion took place, and the final outcome (carried or defeated).
7. The person **seconding** a motion does not have to be in favour of it; they just want it discussed.
8. If you make a motion, you can't speak against but you can vote against it after hearing discussion.
9. If people tend to dominate the discussion, suggest making a rule that people may only speak twice on an issue, the second time after everyone else had had a chance to speak once.

## PERSONAL AGENDAS

Everyone has 'personal agendas'. However, personal agendas that waste council time and interfere with the council's operation can be a problem. Members need to be honest about their concerns, but should not expect all other members to support these, at least not right away. Members who thoroughly study the issue, and support their arguments with strong evidence will have a clearer case for all members to review and discuss.

**Remember that the focus of the work of School Councils needs to be on the best interests of student learning.**

## LISTEN

Council members can put the following into practice to help them meet their responsibility in responding to their school community:

- handle complaints professionally
- be prepared to hear a lot of opinions and problems from the public
- being familiar with policy and procedures that will help you answer specific questions, but some complaints will be difficult to handle. Listen and thank the person for contacting you.
- Do what is to be done according to 'due process'
- Welcome visitors to your meetings. Make sure they know that their involvement is appreciated. People usually hang onto their first impressions, whether they are about your school or about your meetings.
- Talk so parents and others in your community can understand what you are saying. Avoid jargon.
- Encourage open, honest discussion
- Question a person speaking for clarification to be sure you heard what you think you heard.
- Reserve your judgment and listen to the full story before you respond.
- Take notes but do so sparingly so it does not interfere with your paying attention.
- Keep confidential information confidential
- Attack problems not personalities
- Set high expectations. Adopt policies and procedures that support strong and comprehensive school-family-community partnerships.
- Model what you want by your words and actions

## EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR MEETINGS

*“An effective meeting is one in which participants work together in a positive and constructive way; feel comfortable expressing ideas and concerns; leave the meeting feeling like something has been accomplished....”*

*--Yukon Volunteer Bureau, Lunch & Learn series--*

ACTIVITY	YES	NO	COMMENTS/PLANS
1. Do you have an agenda?			
2. Does the meeting location work? (accessible for all)			
3. Do you have a secretary/treasurer for proper record-keeping?			
4. Do your meetings start on time?			
5. Do your meetings end later than they should?			
6. Do you always have quorum? (majority of members in attendance)			
7. Is adequate background information provided to members when needed?			
8. Is this done in a timely manner in order to allow members to come prepared for discussion?			
9. Do members come prepared for discussion and informed decision- making?			
10. Do all participants have an opportunity to participate?			
11. Do participants get off topic—stray from the agenda?			
12. Does the Chair summarize and keep the group focused?			
13. Do you come to decisions that are understood by all participants?			
14. Are 'Action items' and 'Next steps' clear?			
15. Does the meeting have a purpose and goal?			
16. Do you usually meet your goal /fulfill the purpose?			
17. Are members able to shift from 'individual thinking' to 'group thinking'?			
18. When participants leave, are they clear on what is expected of them?			
19. When participants leave, do they appear to be satisfied with what has been accomplished at the meeting?			

## **ACHIEVING BALANCE..... BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES AND LIFE!**

At times, staying on top of the business of a Council may take on the feel of standing in the ocean with the sea water ebbing and flowing around one's ankles—every time one wave goes out, another one comes in to take its place. There is an ever-flowing tide of information to be 'encountered' and frequent action to be taken.

In addition to the methods mentioned earlier for working together efficiently and effectively, these are some of ways of helping manage the responsibilities of Council members:

1. Form committees to deal with some issues and tasks. Seek out interested members of the school community from outside the Council itself. This is a great way to involve youth in the decisions to be made by Councils. Committees should also strive to include representatives from several different sectors of the community.  
Remember, School Council doesn't have to do it all, however they do need committee reps to provide regular updates and reports to the whole Council.
2. Establish realistic timelines for gathering information (through consultation as well as documentation), reading and preparation, discussion and decision-making. To operate with integrity demands this.
3. Talk with others, those who can empathize, as well as those who can be objective. Needless to say, there are some issues that need to be treated confidentially, and it is important to respect those limits.
4. Be open and accessible to those who you represent. However, if and when necessary, set some parameters on your time—suggest deferring to a mutually agreeable time to discuss further. This allows you to accommodate personal and family demands while also being available to the community.
5. And don't forget to regularly celebrate achievements of students and accomplishments of others who contribute to education!

## **SOME TIPS ON SURVEYING PARENTS AND STUDENTS**

### **Things to keep in mind:**

- Be clear on what you want to find out about a topic or issue
- Have several different people review the draft survey tool and make adjustments as needed
- Make sure that questions are clear, easy to understand, not too general, no bias
- Use a standardized 'script' or form
- Be mindful of the literacy level of those to be surveyed
- Be aware of any personality conflicts, if doing a survey face-to-face, or by phone
- Treat sensitive information accordingly—TRUST is a big concern
- It is important to survey students as well as parents—provide an avenue for their input
- Have a committee go through the data and compile the results.

**\*\*REMEMBER—IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU REPORT THE FINDINGS TO THOSE SURVEYED, THROUGH NEWSLETTER, MEETINGS, ETC.)\*\***

## **CONTACTED BY THE MEDIA??**

Here's an article you might want to read.....

### **Psst! Respond to reporters with questions, not off-the-cuff comments**

By Jean Ciriani, Communications Manager, BC School Trustees Association

Most trustees and district staff I know (or BC Parent Advisory Committee leaders) are not too excited about returning calls from reporters. Any conversation with a reporter can lead to only one thing-- media coverage. Which is great if it's good news, but not so great if it involves an unresolved issue, or a crisis or conflict.

People who expect negative media coverage instinctively do not return the call, or call back after the deadline has passed, or avoid answering the phone for a few hours.

Does the avoidance strategy work? If the objective is to guarantee that your position is not represented in the story, it works every time. If, on the other hand, you want your community to understand your position, you have lost a good opportunity.

A few questions come to mind: What does the reporter want? Where did this story come from? Why did she call me? Am I the right person to be answering these questions?

You probably suspect the reporter is out digging for a controversial story. The quickest way to find out is to return the phone call and ask. There is no rule that says the reporter gets to ask all the questions or that the source has to do all the answering. A few questions you may want to ask up front are:

What is the story about?

Where did it come from?

Whom else have you interviewed?

Knowing the origin of the story puts you in a better position to respond. When a reporter asks a general question, she could be working on a story from any number of angles. She may be following up on a press release from a ministry, special interest group or union. She may be researching a local angle on a national story. She may be gathering background to support a feature article generated by a school. Or she may be playing advocate for a disgruntled parent. It is easy, and dangerous, to assume you know the reason for a question.

Reporters are trained to go with the information in hand. Give a quick reaction to a question and very soon you'll see it in print or hear it on the airwaves, which may leave you feeling it was reported out of context. Asking for the reporter's angle tells you what the context will be, so that you can supply the information that you, rather than the reporter, believe is relevant.

Once you know the angle, there is one more critical question to ask: What time is your deadline? A reporter wants one thing from a source--a quote in time to meet the deadline. If there is time available, use it to think and do a little research. Instead of going with several top-of-mind responses, and allowing the reporter to decide what your message will be, consult with colleagues to decide on your message. When you use this strategy, the media becomes your conduit rather than your critic.

*Excerpted and adapted with permission from Education Leader,  
Newsletter of the BC School Trustees Association, September 28, 2000*

**IF YOU WANT PEOPLE'S BEST INTERESTS AND EFFORTS IN THE  
WORK TO BE DONE BY THE GROUP....**

**1. they need to feel~**

- that they are sincerely welcome
- that the goals and objectives arrived at are within reach and make sense to them
  - that progress is being made toward the set goals
  - that what they are doing has real purpose
- that their being in the organization makes a difference to someone
- that the value of their contribution extends beyond the group itself

**2. they need to know~**

- that their ideas had had a fair hearing
- what is expected of them so they can work confidently

**3. they need to have~**

- a sense of sharing in the group's planning
- some responsibilities that challenge, that are within range of their abilities and interests, and that contribute toward reaching the goals of the organization
- information that is relevant and important to doing their work with the group
  - confidence based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment



## SCHOOL COUNCIL PLANNING CALENDAR FOR EVENTS AND MONTHLY TASKS

—a template for School Councils to amend and refer to throughout the year

**Monthly:** Regular public School Council meetings & others (Committees) as needed  
 Submit column for school newsletter  
 Submit approved regular meeting minutes to the Dept

**Note:** *An update on the progress of students as outlined in the School Growth Process should be an agenda item for every Council meeting.*

*September/November and January to April—participation in School Reviews as scheduled*

MONTH	SOME RECURRING EVENTS	Our School Council's activities/plans
August	Meet and plan before/as school commences (refer to Sept items as needed) Advertise AGM and regular Council meeting to the school community	
September	Hold Annual General Meeting Review of feedback from School Growth Planning Advisory, revision of School Growth Plan as required Review enrolment, programming and staffing, etc. with Administration Members assigned to committees as needed Review results and patterns on BCPs and other finals written in previous June Submit signed annual financial statement to the Dept for annual Contribution Agreement, deadline <b>Oct 31</b> Set annual priorities for School Council and establish School Council budget	
October	Attend Fall School Council Conference	
November	Review attendance patterns, improvements and concerns Review enrolment, course offerings, selection and staffing with Administration, especially at secondary level for next semester	
December	Enjoy school celebrations, activities and holidays!	

MONTH	SOME RECURRING EVENTS	Our School Council's Activities/Plans
January	Review School Growth Process and current data (elementary) Review current and projected enrolment numbers and staffing Review ongoing assessments according to the Assessment Matrix	
February	Review School Growth Process and current data (secondary) Review enrolment in various courses and student interest and participation rates Begin reviewing projected student enrolment and known staffing allocation with Administration	
March	Provide input to Principal evaluation process as appropriate Assess continuing interest of members for School Council seats in election years Enjoy SPRING BREAK!	
April	Attend Spring School Council Conference & AYSCBC Annual General Meeting Review projected student enrollment and staffing with Admin Select non-instructional dates for upcoming school year Council begins planning for year end celebrations Generate interest in running for School Council seats in election years School Council nominations process takes place every 2 years Discussion and work on submitting annual School Growth Plan and Innovation Grant proposal as well as application to FNPP* for Cultural Inclusion, Elder in the School and Community Based Orientation funds (as eligible)	
May/June	School Council elections take place every 2 years *Deadline for submission of annual School Growth Plans and Innovation Grants, and FNPP* funding programs is <b>May 30<sup>th</sup></b> Review results and patterns on Yukon Achievement Tests (YATs), etc as soon as available Provide input to Principal evaluation as appropriate Review projected student enrollment and staffing with Admin Set date for AGM for month of September <b>Celebrate graduation and/or Farewells!</b>	

\*FNPP=First Nation Programs & Partnerships, Yukon Education

