

North Vancouver Parent Advisory Council

PAC 101 Workshop – June 6, 2013

Attendance: (NVPAC) David Whitehead, Jane Lagden Holborne, Mike Sexsmith, Helen Zaparniuk (Lynn Valley), Christina Olson, Debra Dennehy (Queensbury), Janet Carswell (Montroyal), Dan Hathway (Braemar), Mel Montgomery, Esther Oyelumade (Cleveland), Deborah Johnstone (Boundary)

NVPAC Treasurer Mike Sexsmith led the workshop. He recorded questions from participants as a basis of discussion, and began with a discussion of the role of the school PAC.

What is a PAC supposed to do?

There are three main purposes of a school PAC:

- to participate in the School Planning Council
- to help parents advocate for their children
- to have fun and help to make the school a fun place to learn

School Planning Council:

The Ministry of Education mandates school plans. Each school district must have a plan, and each school's plan must tie in with that of the school district. School district plans are very high-level, while school plans are very specific. The goal of any school plan is continuous improvement. School Planning Councils are comprised of three parents, one of whom must be on the school PAC Executive, a school administrator, usually the principal, and one teacher. Teachers have not participated directly in school planning councils for several years. Administrators gather information from teachers to present at SPC meetings. Parents who serve on SPCs must remember that their role is to represent many opinions, and not just their own opinion. SPCs are the one place where parents can advocate for what will happen in the school the next year. The school plan should be reported to the PAC. The administrator explains the previous year's goals and how they were achieved, and then describes the goals for the coming year and the plan to achieve them. School Plans are usually due by the end of May; they can be presented at the first PAC meeting of the school year. For further reading, check out [BCCPAC's PAC 101](#).

Questions from participants:

1. How do you manage or keep control of a meeting?

- BCCPAC's [Leadership Manual](#) is a valuable resource for any PAC Chair. See [Tab 14 - Effective Meetings](#) for detailed guidelines on meeting management.
- Start and end on time
- Prepare a timed agenda with some slack in the timing
- Place controversial issues either first or last on the agenda
- Have another executive member watch the room for signs of disengagement (body language) so that a conversation can be terminated
- Have someone keeping track of the order of speakers

- Set this rule of a "Process Check" at the beginning of a discussion. Have participants agree that if they think the conversation is over or wandering, they should raise their hand. Several raised hands means it's time to move on.
- Try to engage the quiet individuals by inviting them to speak if it appears that the same person is doing all the talking
- Don't let the meeting discuss one individual
- If a budget is well-made at the beginning of the year, it may eliminate sources of contention
- Fundraising: create a committee and let them handle the planning and execution of fundraising events. Ensure that the committee members understand that they can only plan events with the informed consent of the administration and the other PAC Executive

2. What is my liability as a member of the PAC Executive?

- PAC Executive have a duty to protect the personal information of all PAC members
- officers of a society are jointly responsible for the finances of the society – PAC Executive should generally know what's going on re the finances
- there is a legal liability for money - the limit to liability is the amount lost
- ensure that two signatures are required for cheques
- a participant mentioned concerns with regard to electronic transfer of PAC funds

3. How do we implement the great ideas that the PAC comes up with?

Moving to action:

- Traditions help action, but there must be flexibility
- Be prepared to change and adapt traditional events as new ideas are brought forward
- Show the educational value of the activity
- Avoid planning during the PAC Meeting; form a committee who should come up with a plan to present at a future meeting.
- If the idea doesn't have many supporters, then it probably won't work. If no-one wants to help with the event, then it may not be the right idea for your school.
- Empower small ideas. Money can be a barrier to getting a project going, so having policies which make accessing money easy will help.
- Mel spoke about the Parent Services Role she assumed at Cleveland. She personally welcomes each new family, takes them on a tour of the school, provides information about the school and advises who to approach if there is a problem. In this role, she was able to assist some parents who were interested in creating a food garden on the school grounds.
- PACs need to have a mechanism so that parents know who they can go to if they have an idea of something they want to be done.
- Bear in mind that events should be fun first, and it's a bonus if they make money

Barriers to action:

- Consider the stakeholders – Principal/Vice-Principal, teachers, custodial staff
- Avoid treading into the scope of the professionals. Be careful of boundaries. Teachers have their year planned out in advance and numerous educational

objectives they have to meet, so they may be unable to accommodate new ideas during the year.

- Ensure you are respectful of the principal's and vice-principal's personal time, as usually one or both will be required to be present at a PAC-sponsored event.
- Respect the custodial staff. Ensure that PAC events end on time and don't place an undue additional burden for clean-up on the custodian.
- Have at least one person on the PAC Executive who has a good relationship with the principal and other school staff

4. Roles of PAC Executive:

- Your PAC's Constitution and Bylaws should define the roles of each PAC Executive Role.
- The PAC Executive is a team, made up of individuals who each have strengths.
- Roles need to be flexible but clear. Problems can arise when no-one wants to take on a certain role.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair must communicate and work well together
- Co-Chairs can be problematic as people outside the Executive don't know who to approach. This scenario can work, but there must be clarity of who handles what.
- See BCCPAC's Leadership Manual, [TAB 7 - Roles, Responsibility and Accountability of PAC/DPAC Executives](#)

Delegation:

- Delegate early, when it's an idea. Turn a problem into a delegation situation. Someone will be empowered, and something will get done.

Executive Meetings:

- Executive Meetings should be used to plan and prepare for the General Membership meeting. Decisions should be made at the General Membership Meeting. Don't disengage parents by taking the decision-making out of the General Membership meeting. Be aware that the culture of each school will be different in this regard.

5. Treasurer Questions:

What to use for record-keeping?

-Quickbooks or other software, spreadsheet, some PACs use handwritten ledger books. There are pros and cons to each method

-Quickbooks or other software:

- Pros:
- double entry bookkeeping,
 - can reconcile bank statements easily,
 - there is a system already in place for a new treasurer taking up the role
 - useful if there should be an audit
 - help available from on-line forums and/or software company

Cons:

- cost
- new treasurer has to learn how to use the software

-Spreadsheet:

- Pros:
- useful for communicating information to parents

- Cons: -may be difficult for a new treasurer to learn the previous treasurer's System
- Ledger book:
 - Pros: -inexpensive
 - Cons: -probably best use by those with training in bookkeeping

For how long should PAC records be kept?

- Probably 7 years for financial records, but other records such as minutes, permanently

What grants are available to PACs?

Community Gaming Grant

- Application can be made April 1 – June 30 each year
- grant is based on the previous year's enrollment and will be paid by September 30
- PACs should be aware that there are restrictions on what can be purchased with gaming grants. There are also time limits for spending the grant.

North Van PAC Grants

- NVPAC offers a number of grants to its member PACs
- to apply, the PAC Chair or Treasurer should contact treasurer@northvanpac.org.
- Other grants are available from foundations but the application process can be onerous, and the probability of receiving a grant quite low. However, a passionate group of parents might be able to gather the necessary information and be successful.

What financial institution to use?

- Meeting participants use either North Shore Credit Union or VanCity Credit Union
- A question of no or low fees vs interest income

Income Tax Receipts issued by North Van School District on behalf of PACs:

- With prior arrangement, NVSD may issue income tax receipts on behalf of PACs
- Have the Principal put you in touch with the appropriate school district personnel to learn the current procedure
- The PAC sends a list containing the full names and addresses of donors and the amount donated by each, together with a cheque equalling the total of the amounts requiring receipts to the school district. The school district keeps these funds in a separate trust account for the PAC and issues income tax receipts to the donors.
- The PAC retains full control of funds held on its behalf by the school district
- A participant recommended using the funds held by the school district as soon as possible
- If the balance in the school district trust account does not balance with the PAC's records, it is recommended to contact the school's administrative assistant who should be able to help.