



School Partnerships

A Guide for Parents,
Schools, and Communities



Healthy Child
Manitoba



Manitoba

Putting children and families first

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

*A Guide for Parents,
Schools, and Communities*

2005

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following individuals in the development of *School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities*.

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PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSION

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is committed to fostering inclusion for all people.

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.

In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

PREFACE

Intended Audience

This document is designed to support parents¹, educators, community members, and other individuals interested in participating in a partnership to support student learning.

Background

School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities is a collaborative response to a request to update *Advisory Councils for School Leadership: A Handbook for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators* (1996). Relationships between schools, families, and communities have evolved greatly since 1996. Today, Manitoba schools welcome family and community representation for effective school and division planning. Families, schools, and communities that work and plan together meet the shared goal of improving education for Manitoba students.

Purpose

This document is intended as a resource guide to assist both formal and informal school advisory groups and committees in their roles as partners in supporting student success at school.

Defining School Partnerships

For the purpose of this document, school partnerships refer to all parent and community councils, committees or groups whose function is to assist schools in providing safe, caring, appropriate, and inclusive education. These partnerships include Advisory Councils for School Leadership (ACSLs), Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), Home and School Associations (HSAs), and School Committees (SC) among others.

¹ In this document, the term 'parents' refers to both parents or guardians and is used with the recognition that in some cases only one parent may be involved in a child's education.

INTRODUCTION



“Parents, families, and community members play a very important role in the education system. It is important for them to realize how much influence they can have over students and schools, especially when they become involved in school matters.”
(*Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities*, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2004)

Today, parents and communities are actively involved in Manitoba schools. Involvement ranges from helping with homework to joining school councils and committees. Parents are attending parent-teacher interviews and cheering at sporting activities. Businesses are opening their doors for student volunteer programs. Many communities and schools throughout the province are working together to support student success.

In 1996, the document *Advisory Councils for School Leadership: A Handbook for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators* was published to support the formation of Advisory Councils for School Leadership based on new legislation and regulations that had been enacted. *School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities* updates the 1996 document. It provides guidelines to support current and future partnerships in Manitoba schools and focuses on formalized partnerships between parents and schools.

School partnerships play an important role in decision making and accountability, and may support school planning, fundraising, and innovations to improve student success, school climate, and volunteerism.

School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities offers support for encouraging positive relationships with school partners. Important activities that are addressed include

- encouraging parents and communities to be partners in learning
- increasing and sustaining school partnership participation
- supporting open communication in school partnerships
- exploring a variety of roles and responsibilities of school partnerships
- recognizing and addressing potential disputes
- outlining procedures and guidelines for formalized school partnerships

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

“Through commitment and creativity school partnerships will generate strong community spirit. Community spirit makes a school more than just a building—it creates a learning environment where students feel the commitment of their fellow students, their principal, their teachers, and their parents. This shared commitment will make the common goal a reality—better education.” (*School Council Resource Manual*, Alberta Learning, 1995)

Advantages of School and Parent/Community Partnerships

Educating children and youth is an important and shared responsibility.

When parents, families, and the community are involved in the education of children and youth

- student achievement tends to increase
- students feel more supported
- students’ attitudes change in a positive way

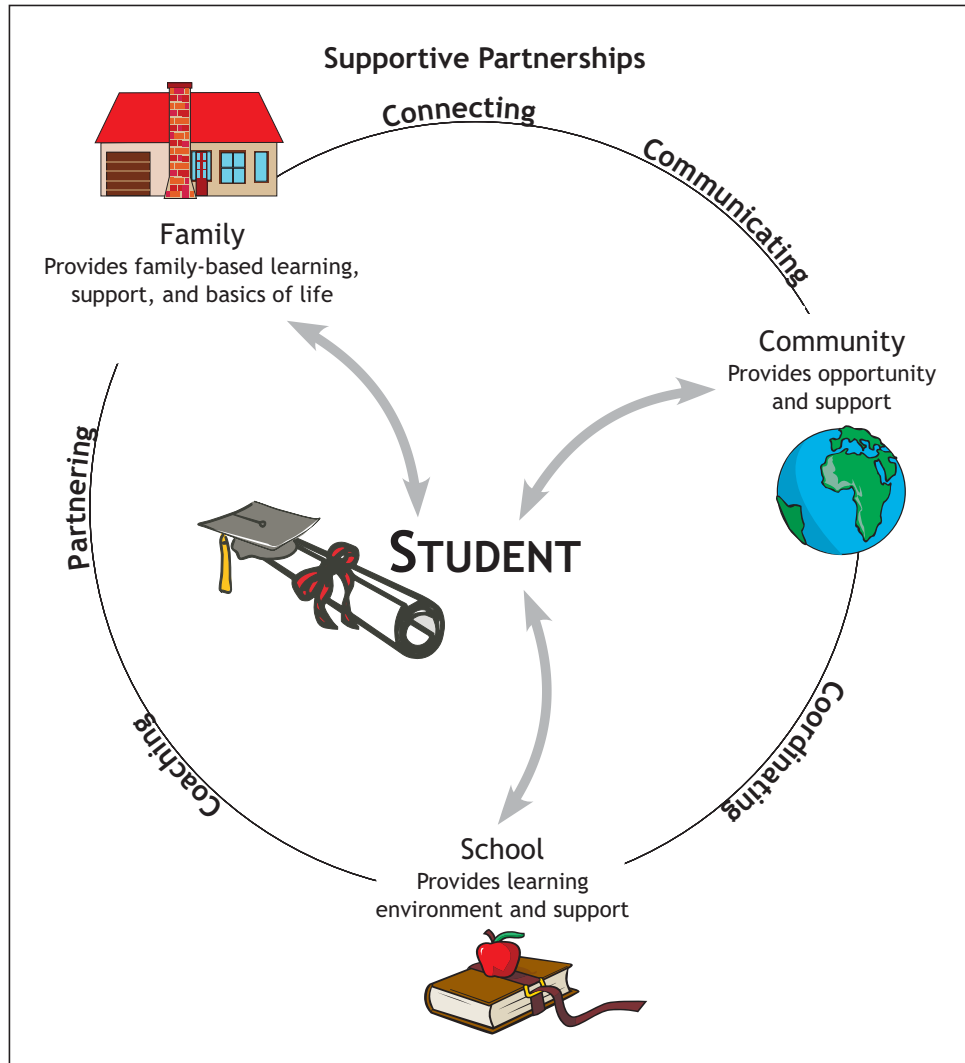
When parents are involved in the decision-making process they are more likely to support the decisions that are made. Parents, families, and community members provide valuable perspectives that enhance the decision-making process.

Positive Results

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.

Joint Responsibilities

Manitoba schools are involved in a variety of partnerships. Some are more formal than others. Some are temporary and others are ongoing. All partnerships are equally important and valuable to the educational process and build upon each other. The diagram on the next page shows how families, schools, and communities join together to support student success.



“Collaboration is the process of developing interdependent relationships where all are focused on a common purpose and set of goals, and where people must rely on each other to achieve these goals. It is the synergy created when a group’s effectiveness exceeds what individuals can accomplish on their own.” (*Building Shared Responsibility for Student Learning*, Conzemius and O’Neill, 2001)

Working together strengthens our ability to support positive educational change for our children and schools. The wide range of school-related activities that Manitobans share is unique to each community, each school, and each parent (see Appendix A).

School Partnership Councils

Formalized partnerships include: Advisory Councils for School Leadership, Parent Advisory Councils, Home and School Associations, and School Committees.

Formalized partnerships involve nominations, elections, regular meetings, and specific roles and responsibilities. In this document, these partnerships are referred to as ‘school partnership councils’. Descriptions of these particular groups and a sample of their typical activities are found in the chart on the following page.

Group	Advisory Council for School Leadership (ACSL)	Parent Advisory Council (PAC)	Home and School Association (HSA)	School Committees (SC)
Governed By	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided by legislation 	Guided by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> school policies local school board/local education authority policies 		
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected at annual meeting according to constitution and by-laws Hold regular open, public meetings 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer, nomination, or election based on local decision
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a forum and voice for parents and communities to discuss and present views Encourage parent participation Liaise with school administration 			
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents, community members (other than parents), students, teacher representatives, and school administrators 			
Sample Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in school improvement activities Discuss school plans with administration Inform parents and community members of school activities Promote community interest, understanding, and involvement Advocate for quality education and well-being of children and youth Inform parents and community members of school activities and volunteer opportunities Coordinate specific events such as Safe Grad, fundraising, fairs, and lunch programs 			

“Successful partnerships are a two-way street where all parties realize they have something to learn. Finding partners and building alliances is a good way to share resources... Partnerships also strengthen people’s capacity to learn and get better over time by opening them up to divergent viewpoints and honest feedback.”
(What’s Worth Fighting for Out There?, Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998)

Building positive working relationships promotes and supports educational successes both within and beyond the school setting.

Each school community has a unique identity (see Appendix B for specific roles and responsibilities) that is defined by their context, established mandates, and decision making:

- Parents and Families**—family members, biological parents, extended families, foster parents, and legal guardians
- Teachers and Student Support Teams**—school division staff (classroom, resource, special education, and subject specialist teachers, counsellors, consultants), clinicians, and educational assistants
- School Leaders**—principals, vice-principals and/or school leadership teams
- Partnership Councils**—ACSLs, PACs, HSAs, and SCs
- Student Councils**—elected student officials from different grade groups, or student organizations

6. **School Division Administrators**—superintendents, assistant superintendents, secretary treasurers, coordinators, and other senior staff in the local school division
7. **Trustees**—elected officials of the school division board
8. **Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY)**—consultants, coordinators, directors, and Minister of Education

Characteristics of Effective School Partnerships

School partnerships invite parents, families, and communities to participate in the educational process at the grassroots level. Effective school partnerships

- are student-centred
- make decisions together
- have educational goals as a top priority
- value and respect school, family, and community support
- communicate respectfully, using established school division protocols
- develop and use strategies to resolve conflict
- develop and follow a code of ethics that is created with school staff, parents, and students.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”
(Margaret Mead)



SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP COUNCILS

Getting Started

Partnership Council Considerations

Successful school partnerships maintain positive team-building skills. Four key considerations are:

- ☑ **Time.** Volunteering to be a school partnership council member takes time, patience, and energy. Ensure council members feel valued and that the amount of time devoted to council business is clearly stated and understood by all.
- ☑ **Issues.** All school partnership councils face issues that may move them beyond their typical comfort zone. During regular meetings, take time to build relationships, trust, and support for positive risk-taking, and to talk about how you will deal with issues.
- ☑ **Leadership.** Strong leadership plays a critical role in the effectiveness of any council or activity. A chairperson who is organized and enthusiastic can keep meetings and initiatives on track and moving forward. Other members who take on key roles for sub-committees can broaden the base of leadership and add commitment to projects.
- ☑ **Skill Building.** When school partnership councils consult with others and work together, members develop leadership skills that make the committee stronger and help it to last longer. All council members develop the skills to step into a leadership role when needed. This ability distributes the workload more evenly and reduces stress levels for everyone.

(For more detailed information related to team mandates and goal setting, please see A Toolbox for Leaders, p. 15).



Encouraging Involvement

Parent, family and community partnerships support school-based activities that enhance positive teaching and learning. Because partnerships evolve over time, and activities and members change, it is important to develop or review guidelines for council work at the beginning of each school year. By doing so, any changes that may have occurred in the school or broader community that affect the current year's work can be addressed quickly. Here are some suggestions:

- ☑ **Seek input from the school community.** Timely input is a productive way to identify meaningful priorities that meet the changing needs of the community. Some examples of collecting input would be: town hall meetings, surveys, interviewing key community members, focus group meetings, and using data collected through the school planning process.
- ☑ **Remain consistent with the views of the entire school community.** Keep in mind the diversity of the community when planning and making decisions.
- ☑ **Remain consistent with school division policies and procedures.** Many school divisions have adopted specific strategies for discussion, decision making, and communication that may assist school partnerships.
- ☑ **Maintain ongoing communication with the school community.** Keep the community informed of roles, mission, vision, priorities, plans, and activities. A variety of ways to inform the community include: newsletters, open meetings, announcements, and advertisements.
- ☑ **Involve families.** A child's understanding of values and traditions related to the home and community environment. As a result, parents form a natural link between communities and schools. Encourage all parents to bring essential community perspectives to planning and decision making.
- ☑ **Encourage all forms of community involvement and support.** Encourage wider involvement in schools. Identify, access, and coordinate community resources.
- ☑ **Encourage a student-centred direction.** Promote the best interests of all students.
- ☑ **Maintain high ethical standards.** Part of building positive relationships involves being caring and discreet. Encourage discussions that focus on the entire school community and that are within the roles and responsibilities of the partnership council.

Maintaining Involvement

Working together helps to maintain a connection between school partners. It offers parents and staff a sense of ownership and pride in their efforts to enhance the success of all learners. Maintaining active involvement has many stages and challenges including:

- ☑ **Consultation.** Before and while developing a school partnership council, encourage parents to indicate which activities and programs are compatible with their needs, strengths, and interests. This process helps to ensure relevant goal setting and commitment.
- ☑ **Strong Commitment.** Written policies and administrative support also aids in effective parental involvement. Written policies reinforce the importance of parental involvement and help to form the context for council activities. School support may be available to school partnership groups by providing resources, meeting space, duplication equipment, and the means of communication such as bulletins and newsletters.
- ☑ **Ongoing Communication and Planning.** Clear communication and mutual support are keys to active and sustained involvement. Positive relationships are strengthened when school staff and parents communicate clearly and frequently with each other about school policies, programs, or the individual growth and development of students. Some suggestions to maintain involvement include:
 - Schedule meetings at times that are convenient to most parents and community members. Adjust times by consensus.
 - Welcome students and other young people to meetings.
 - Encourage participation from all segments of the community. School partnership councils work best when the representatives reflect the diversity of the students in the school.
 - Create a positive atmosphere of co-operation and trust.
 - Keep meetings brief and on topic.
 - Share information openly and keep all members fully informed of opportunities for involvement.
 - Give positive feedback for work that has been accomplished.
 - Maintain ongoing communication of upcoming events; celebrate results of recent events.
 - Distribute the workload evenly with reasonable timelines for completion.

“When we take positive approaches to resolving our disputes, we are creating opportunities to build strong working relationships. When our relationships are built with trust, respect, and creative problem solving, we are setting positive examples for our students.” (*Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities*, 2004)

Supporting Communication

When working in a school partnership, good communication is essential. How clearly we communicate our ideas is often the key to effective decision making. When people come together to make decisions, agreements are often as common as disagreements.

Agreement

School partnership councils are positive role models for everyone in the school when agreements are reached after initial disagreements. Communication that resolves issues in a positive manner usually includes

- understanding school processes/policies
- using clear, respectful language and behaviour
- identifying and stating areas of agreement and disagreement
- being aware of potential difficulties
- working together to reach an agreement as soon as possible

Disagreement

Communicating with different partners in a variety of settings can sometimes be challenging. Disagreements can be helpful to decision making and occur even when groups work well together. When a compromise is reached over a difference of opinion it often results in a positive change. When disagreements occur, effective councils and committees work hard to resolve differences and to continue to work in a positive way.

Understanding Conflict

Working together creates a sense of social responsibility that allows all participants to feel accepted and valued.

Although there are strategies that may be helpful in resolving disputes or disagreements, a successful outcome depends on the willingness of people to work together. (See page 25 for helpful hints for resolving disagreements.)

Suggestions for Effective Communication

- Show interest in and listen to what other people have to say.
- Be aware of personal body language and that of others.
- Rephrase what the speaker is saying to ensure the message was understood correctly (i.e., Did I understand...).
- Consider the audience; try not to hurt feelings or alienate other members.
- Encourage group members to share their thoughts and ideas.

- Recognize complaints and gossip as emotional responses. Refocus members towards productive discussions within the responsibility of the council.
- Express support for the ideas of others.
- If you disagree, disagree in a respectful way.
- Consider requests for information/feedback as a natural process.
- Be sympathetic towards the feelings of others.
- Consider the position of other people to understand their points of view.

Information Sharing

School partnership council members represent the parents of the school and the community at large and are role models for others. It is therefore important that communication with others is clear, responsible, and timely. An atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and inclusion is created when lines of communication remain open and respectful. Helpful strategies for partnership councils include

- keeping in touch with your community, partners, parents, principal, superintendent, and trustee
- promoting an inclusive environment by considering every parent of a student in the school as a participant
- announcing meetings well in advance and providing child care, whenever possible, to encourage members to attend
- making the agenda flexible so members have the opportunity to raise issues and concerns
- providing opportunities to hear from a number of different partners
- meeting on an a regular basis
- establishing formal communication links with the school board to:
 - discuss issues of mutual concern
 - give and receive information
 - invite board members to council meetings
- working with other organizations to:
 - share successes and failures
 - receive and offer support and information
 - be aware of provincial perspectives

School partnership councils may have diverse memberships (e.g., parents, elders, youth, teachers, and principals). Individual communication skills help to build and strengthen a group's ability to work together.

Sharing Student Success

When we choose to involve ourselves positively in the lives of young people, everyone benefits.

- As a community, we become stronger. As people, we become healthier in our relationships, our homes, and our visions for the future.
- There are many ways to be involved, and all types of involvement are important to the development of successful school experiences.
- When we focus ourselves on positive parenting at home and attend school concerts or open houses, we support student success. When we get involved with our children as they work on their homework, we partner with schools to support student success.
- When we volunteer, respond to school surveys, communicate with the school, and encourage our children to do well at school, celebrating their learning, we become partners with schools in creating positive environments for student success.
- When we become members of partnership councils, we formalize our relationship together to assist in decision making and program planning that fits with the unique characteristics of each of our communities.

There are many important reasons for working together to support student success and all of them are positive. We all have a part to play in educating the whole child. After all, our children are our future.



A TOOLBOX FOR LEADERS

At the Beginning of a New School Year

The leader plays an important role in creating a climate of trust and respect where the views of all members are listened to and understood. This climate provides a strong foundation for working together.

- Have an informal 'welcome aboard' meeting for all new members and explain school partnership councils and how meetings and committees will function.
- Explain the role of school partnerships.
- Discuss the importance of school partnerships: building relationships to assist in decision making at the school level.
- Provide an orientation session where new members
 - receive a copy of *School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Community*
 - review the key points in the Guide
 - share their experiences
 - engage in a mentorship program
 - participate in an informal discussion where experienced council members share experiences and discuss the benefits of active involvement on the partnership council in supporting positive school and community change
- Make sure that the Council is representative of the community—invite members of minority groups to participate.

Components of Effective Team Building

Team Mandate

Clarifying the school partnership council's mandate before visioning or planning begins is an important first step. To be effective, members need to be clear about what decisions, if any, the council can make on its own and when it will be preparing recommendations for others to approve and carry out.

Goal Setting

The primary goal of all school partnerships is to work toward the best possible education for all students in their school. The school partnership council is a place where students, parents, teachers, principals, community members, administrators, and trustees discuss and plan education in their school and community.

School partnership councils

- clarify their mandate, create their vision, and define their mission statement and priorities. These issues are respectfully aligned with those already practised by the school. New ideas are introduced as priorities and are developed after the mandate, mission, and vision have been identified and agreed upon.
- support school and school division planning, community reports, programs, and priorities through ongoing discussions and feedback
- participate in school and school division planning, recommending and supporting future directions for the education of their students

Planning

Planning is setting priorities for a group and creating an action plan to achieve outcomes and priorities. The steps usually include

- written priorities and outcomes
- clear action plans with strategies and timelines
- collection and analysis of information
- assessment and evaluation of progress
- evaluation of results
- communication of results and decision making for next steps

Evaluation

Evaluation is a process directed toward improvement. Evaluating partnership council meetings on a regular basis can assist the group in

- planning effective meetings
- making positive changes at meetings
- making budget decisions
- setting new priorities
- vision building

Finances

- Each school partnership council needs to deal with the issue of financial support. Whether or not the school partnership council raises funds for school initiatives is a local decision.
- If a school partnership council has financial responsibility, it needs to establish a process for record-keeping and budgeting. For ACSLs, the process must comply with school division policies and procedures.

Suggested School Partnership Procedures

(Adapted from *The Roles, Responsibilities and Functions of a Board, A Board Development Guide*. Manitoba Family Services, 2002. Reproduced with permission.)

School partnership councils establish procedures that are used to inform all members. These procedures and policies assist partners in contributing effectively to school improvement.

School partnership councils may

- develop agendas
- establish a process by which they select and train (if required) a chairperson
- select a secretary to record minutes
- establish subcommittees
- use a process to reach decisions as a group (see *Decision-making Models*—pages 24 and 25)
- create or revise a constitution and by-laws (see *Creating a Constitution*—pages 23 and 24)
- develop or revise mission and vision statements for their group (see *Vision and Mission Statement*—page 22)
- plan with other education partners

Selecting a Chairperson for the School Partnership Council

The chairperson is usually nominated by the council members and each member is allowed to vote. Other methods of selecting a chairperson are possible. Typically, the position of chairperson is held for one year, but in some cases the role may be extended for a longer period. The chairperson

- sets a climate for collaboration and decision making
- establishes agendas
- conducts meetings
- establishes rules of order for meetings
- establishes and delegates responsibility to subcommittees where appropriate
- leads the committee in developing a constitution

Selecting a Secretary

The secretary is usually nominated by the council members and each member is allowed to vote. Typically, the position of secretary is held for one year but may be extended for a longer period. The secretary is responsible for recording and distributing the minutes of all the meetings. Minutes are the permanent record of the meeting. Effective minutes are usually brief and to the point and objectively summarize the main ideas

and points of discussion. It is important that the minutes record all motions, including who made the motion, who seconded it, and whether the motion was accepted or defeated.

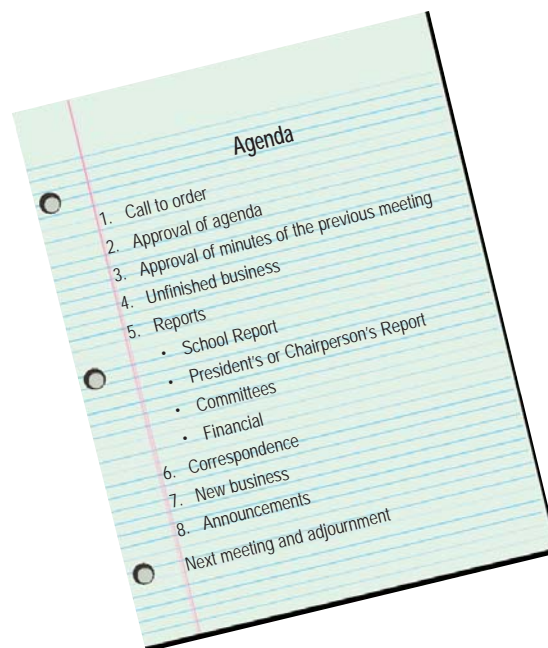
Minutes usually contain:

- name of the group
- date, time, and location of the meeting
- name of the chairperson
- names of individuals present, absent, and sending regrets
- approval or amendment of minutes of the previous meeting
- summary/highlights of business for each agenda item
- clear indication of follow-up action or activity
- motions and resolutions recorded word-for-word
- list of correspondence, reports, and documents presented
- secretary's name

Setting Agendas

An effective meeting requires an agenda. It provides an outline of what will be discussed, what decisions need to be made, and in what order. An agenda advises participants of the date, time, location, and topics of the meeting. The purpose is to provide structure to the meeting, to inform, and to advance the business of the meeting.

The following is a sample of a meeting agenda:



Preparation for Meetings

- Prepare the agenda with key people (such as principal, committee executive).
- Be prompt and enthusiastic.
- Tell the vice-president if you will be absent from a scheduled meeting.
- Start on time. Run an orderly meeting. Guide the discussion. Tactfully shift conversations that are not productive or that are being dominated by one or two people.
- Follow meeting procedures and the agenda in a courteous and thoughtful manner.
- Make guests feel welcomed.
- Organize committees and subcommittees for partnership council tasks. Offer help to people who have been assigned tasks.
- Encourage everyone to participate in the meeting.
- Plan and follow up with committee leaders for progress. Acknowledge members at meetings for their assistance.
- Keep the agenda moving. When the discussion stalls, agree to return to the issue at a later, specified time, or delegate a small group to study the issue and report back to the group at the next meeting.
- Thank everyone for being at the meeting. Make sure everyone knows when and where the next meeting will be. If there are assignments to be finished for the next meeting, summarize what is being reported at the next meeting.
- End the meeting on time.

Conducting Effective Meetings

Meetings are held regularly and for specific reasons to

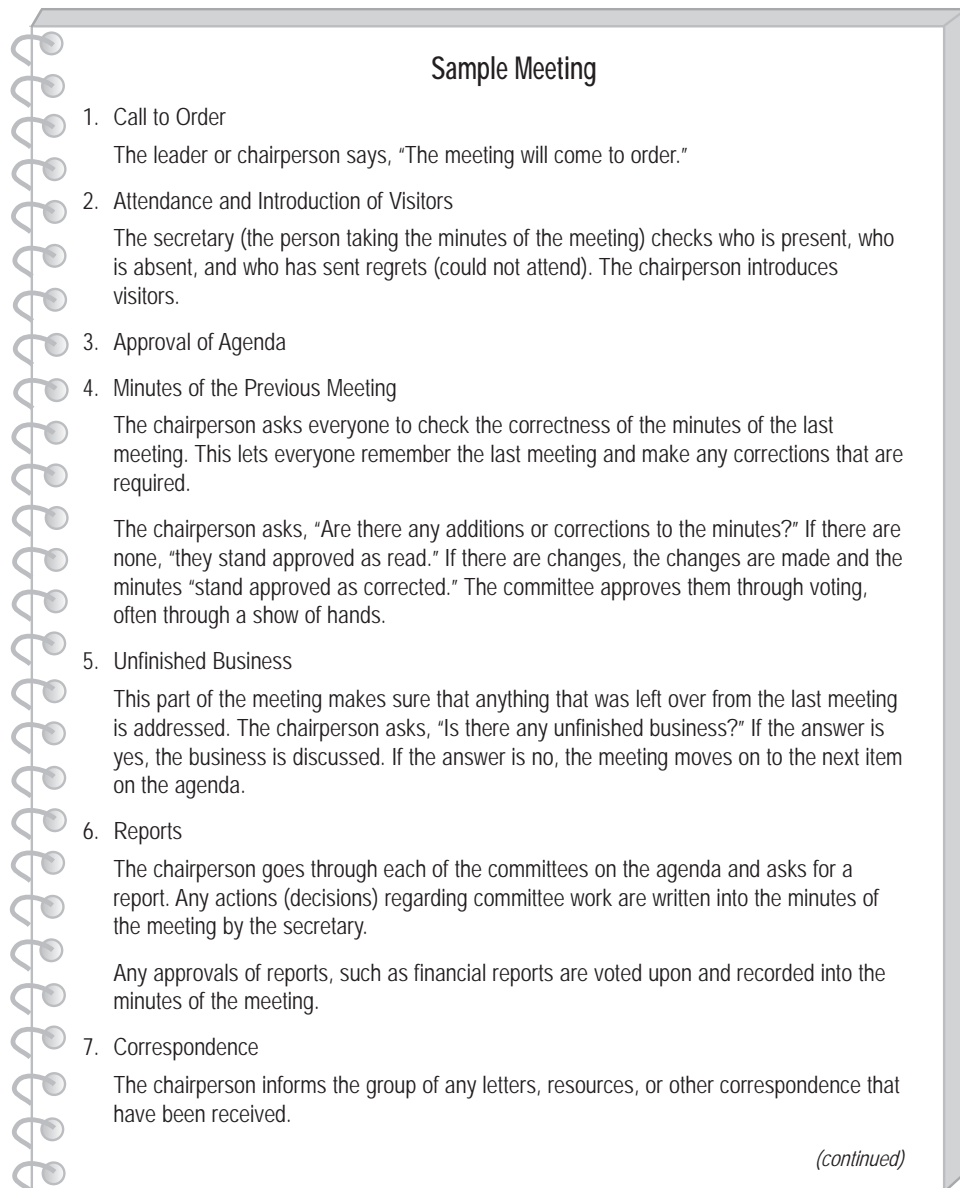
- ensure action
- resolve a problem
- review a report
- provide information
- promote meaningful and helpful discussions
- receive information

A clear understanding of the purpose of each meeting and the role of the school partnership council are necessary for the meeting to be effective. Well-managed meetings facilitate productive planning, problem solving, and a positive exchange of ideas.

Running a Meeting

Many leaders use a process called “Roberts’ Rules of Order” during their meetings to help the agenda run smoothly. The rules of order are sometimes called ‘parliamentary procedure’ and are used to make sure everyone at the meeting knows what happened at the last meeting, to make decisions and to end the meeting.

The following is a sample of a meeting, following an agenda, using formal rules of order:



Sample Meeting

1. Call to Order
The leader or chairperson says, “The meeting will come to order.”
2. Attendance and Introduction of Visitors
The secretary (the person taking the minutes of the meeting) checks who is present, who is absent, and who has sent regrets (could not attend). The chairperson introduces visitors.
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
The chairperson asks everyone to check the correctness of the minutes of the last meeting. This lets everyone remember the last meeting and make any corrections that are required.

The chairperson asks, “Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes?” If there are none, “they stand approved as read.” If there are changes, the changes are made and the minutes “stand approved as corrected.” The committee approves them through voting, often through a show of hands.
5. Unfinished Business
This part of the meeting makes sure that anything that was left over from the last meeting is addressed. The chairperson asks, “Is there any unfinished business?” If the answer is yes, the business is discussed. If the answer is no, the meeting moves on to the next item on the agenda.
6. Reports
The chairperson goes through each of the committees on the agenda and asks for a report. Any actions (decisions) regarding committee work are written into the minutes of the meeting by the secretary.

Any approvals of reports, such as financial reports are voted upon and recorded into the minutes of the meeting.
7. Correspondence
The chairperson informs the group of any letters, resources, or other correspondence that have been received.

(continued)

Sample Meeting (continued)

8. New Business

This part of the meeting is designed for new ideas.

- The chairperson asks, "Is there any new business?" The people at the meeting explain their ideas one at a time. The chairperson helps the flow of conversation by letting only one person talk at a time.
- If actions (decisions) are required based on someone's idea, the action is stated as a 'motion'. Someone at the meeting says, "I move that we (action to be taken)...." The secretary records the motion and the name of the person who made it. A second person must agree with the motion. "I second the motion" is the typical way people say this at a meeting.
- The chairperson then says, "It is moved and seconded that we (action to be taken). Is there any discussion?" Everyone has a chance to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the motion before they vote on whether they like the idea or not.
- When the discussion has ended, the chairperson asks, "All in favour (repeat the motion)?" People usually raise their hands to show they agree. "All opposed?" People who don't like the motion raise their hands to show they disagree. "Abstained?" People who don't want to choose for or against the motion raise their hands.
- If the majority of people agree, "The motion is carried." If more people vote no, "the motion is defeated." The secretary records the decision.

9. Announcements

The chairperson asks, "Are there any announcements?" The place, date, and time for the next meeting and any actions that will occur between meetings are announced.

10. Adjournment

The chairperson asks, "Is there a motion to adjourn?" Someone 'moves' to adjourn the meeting. A second person says, "I second the motion." The chairperson then says, "It is moved and seconded that we adjourn. All in favour?" People raise their hands to indicate agreement. "All those opposed?" People raise their hands to indicate they do not want the meeting to end. "The motion is carried and the meeting is adjourned" when the majority of people have voted to end the meeting.

(Adapted by permission from "So You're the Club President" www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/4H71A.pdf. Copyright 2003 Iowa State University Extension.)

Forming Committees

The use of committees can be an effective way to share the workload and involve more members of the school community. Committees can be formed to address a number of needs. It is important that their purpose and responsibilities be defined clearly.

The advantages of using committees include:

- sharing of workload
- allowing for individual participation
- giving people with special skills and interests an opportunity to participate on a committee
- increasing members' ownership for the school partnership council's work

Using committees effectively is important. The following suggestions offer school partnership councils a number of ways to become more effective and efficient:

- use short-term committees when appropriate; they appeal to busy people
- ask people other than school partnership members, including school staff, parents, community members, and professionals to assist
- create each committee for a specific reason
- ensure each committee has clear direction
- avoid overloading one or two members

Vision Statements

A vision statement is a clearly written description of a shared dream or image of what a school community should or could become in the future. The challenge is blending the dreams or vision of all individual council members into one vision that reflects the values of the school's community. A school partnership council vision statement clearly articulates the future everyone will work toward. Vision statements are:

- strongly held beliefs
- broad or general in focus
- easy to picture
- key factors critical to developing and maintaining an effective, caring school environment

Mission Statements

A mission statement states why a school partnership council exists. Because the primary function of partnership councils is to enhance student success, this should be reflected in the mission statement. The mission statement of a partnership council supports the existing mission statement of the school.

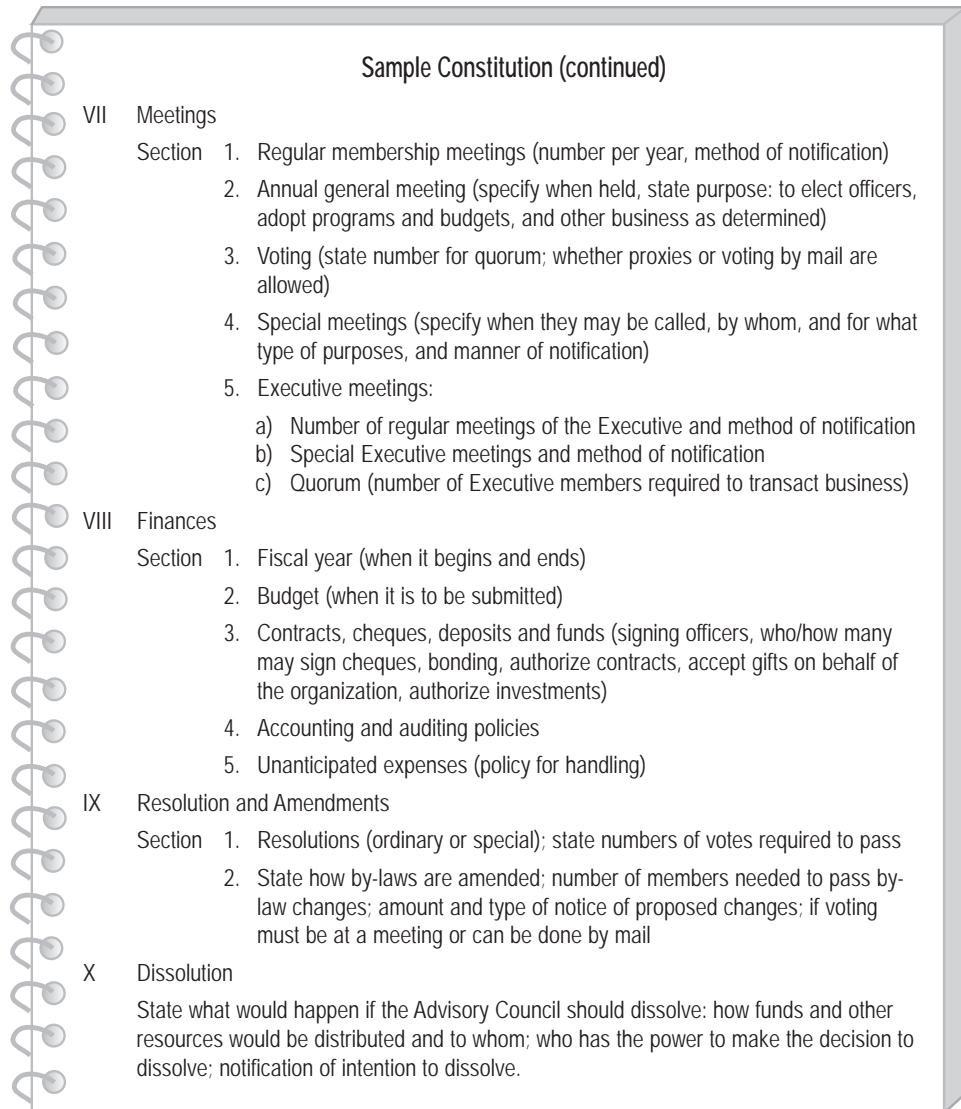
Creating a Constitution

A constitution outlines how a school partnership council operates and describes aspects of the organization.

Sample Constitution

- I Name of Organization
- II Purpose of Organization
- III Objectives of Organization
- IV Membership
 - Section 1. Eligibility (who may be a member)
 - 2. Types of membership (voting, non-voting, etc.)
 - 3. Resignation and reinstatement procedures
- V Partnership Council
 - Section 1. Composition:
 - a) Officers (chairperson, vice-presidents, secretary, treasurer)
 - b) Other council members (numbers)
 - 2. Terms of office (how long council members and officers serve)
 - 3. Nominations and election procedure
 - a) Nominating committee (method of selection, number of members, when they must present their recommendations)
 - b) Elections (when held, how conducted, filling vacancies, removal)
 - 4. Duties and powers (of the council and of the individual members of the council)
- VI Committees
 - Section 1. List standing committees and authorized ad hoc committees as deemed necessary by the council. Usual standing committees are those which must function year-round in order to sustain the organization (e.g., executive, fundraising, membership, and programs)
 - 2. Appointment method (state that committee chairpersons are appointed by the chairperson or are elected by the council)
 - 3. Term of office
 - 4. Chairperson
 - 5. Vacancies (filling) and removal of committee members
 - 6. Terms of Reference (duties and responsibilities)

(continued)



Decision-Making Models

There are a number of ways a school partnership council can reach decisions. The approach taken usually depends on the priority of the issue and the degree of agreement among council members. Depending on the importance of the decision, a combination of models may be regularly used.

Collaboration is achieved through dialogue:

- talk and work together to reach a group decision
- collaboration is used when the issue has been fully discussed and most council members are in agreement with the general direction of the decision

Consensus building requires individuals to agree on an action that meets the needs of the group:

- state the issue to open discussion
- narrow the focus of discussion to areas of concern
- modify statements where agreement needs to be reached
- use consensus voting

Consensus is used when the issue has been discussed and some council members are hesitant with the direction of the decision.

Majority vote rule is usually used when feelings and views on an issue are deeply held and collaboration or consensus is not achievable:

- state and discuss the issue
- the chairperson calls for a vote
- votes are counted and the majority wins
- if the vote results in a tie, the chairperson votes to decide the matter

Majority vote rule is used when the issue has been formally discussed and council members are divided on the direction of the decision.

Helpful Hints to Resolve Disagreements

(Condensed and adapted from *Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families, and Communities*. MECY, 2004. Used with permission.)

These are some suggestions that are helpful to guide the process to resolve disputes that may arise from time to time.

Be flexible: Consistency is important, but so is flexibility. Flexibility respects unique situations and individuals. Consider each other's positions, suggestions, and points of view. Consider a variety of possible solutions.

Be timely: When a dispute arises, the goal is to resolve it quickly and fairly. But it is also important to have time to gather information and prepare.

Create a comfortable meeting environment: When setting up a meeting, the time should be convenient for everyone. Everyone should be able to see and hear each other easily.

Deal with anger: If you are in a dispute with someone who is angry, you might patiently listen. You might calmly explain that now may not be the best time to have the conversation. Suggest another time if anger gets in the way of finding a solution.

Deal with issues: Don't let little things become big things. Any time is a good time to encourage open, honest communication. Try to work together to understand and solve problems.

Establish ground rules: Create guidelines respecting rules of behaviour and communication, and the kinds of things that could stop a meeting.

Focus: The best way to keep a meeting productive and focused is to be clear about the purpose of the meeting, the key issues that are being discussed, and the motives and goals of the people involved.

Work together: Sometimes it is difficult to understand another person or to make ourselves understood. Try to be open to ways of working together. Resolving disputes builds relationships that support learning.

Guidelines for Developing Terms of Reference

Terms of reference should include the following points:

- Name of Committee:* What is the committee's name?
- Purpose:* What is the general description of the area in which the committee works and what does it do?
- Membership:* Is representation from interest groups needed? Is staff assistance needed: Who is appropriate? What is the length of term? Are members appointed or elected?
- Time Frame for Ad Hoc Committees:* How long will the committee(s) take to complete their task?
- Mandate:* Which decisions will the committee make?
- Accountability:* To whom does the committee report? How often does it report?
- Orientation:* How are new members oriented?
- Meeting Schedule:* Are meetings held on a regular basis?
- Responsibilities and Functions:* Are these compatible with vision and mission statements?
- Budget:* How much money is needed? Where will these funds be obtained?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

APPENDIX A: PARENT INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SCHOOL

The following table outlines the most common partnerships that parents have developed in Manitoba.

	Support	Open Communication	Home and Community Learning	Volunteering and Advising	Building Partnerships	Formalized Councils
Types of Activities/ Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing safe and caring home providing family-based learning meeting basic needs parenting education home-school communication consent for clinical services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussing student preferences with teacher discussing concerns with teacher reviewing school information attending school events attending parent-teacher conferences reading school newsletters welcoming home visits answering surveys reading community reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraging student learning creating workspace reading to student supporting homework completion participating in family literacy programs parent/family involvement in assignments monitoring learning contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attending school events volunteering in classroom, field trips, etc. leading clubs tutoring coordinating newsletters advising on school policies (e.g., codes of conduct, schedules, course options) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> business partnerships and sponsorships youth community service/work experience early intervention programs shared facilities presenter at career days, information fairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school team planning nominating and serving on partnership councils or committees shared management of decision making, planning, and reporting
Sample Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-help groups parenting networks after school daycare volunteer committees (fundraising, playground and lunch monitors, chaperones) volunteer services (classroom tutoring, library assistant) volunteer programs (leading school groups, teams, community service) School Committees Community Associations School Trustees Associations Parent Advisory Councils Home and School Associations Councils for School Leadership 					

For more information see: Epstein, J.L., M.G. Sanders, B.S. Simon, K.C. Salinas, N.R. Jansorn, and F.L. Van Voorhis. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2002.

APPENDIX B: SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP SHARED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students

Students have the opportunity to participate in collective decision making when they are

- members on a partnership council
- empowered with the ability to go beyond the planning of social events and extracurricular activities

Students in senior years often participate on school partnership groups as student council members. The attitudes, knowledge, and values a student brings to the council meetings can influence the decisions made by the council or the school.

The role a student plays as an educational partner is important to

- make suggestions that reflect student perspectives
- help design policies and programs
- seek the views of other students and share with the council
- represent students
- seek ongoing consultation with school principal
- provide feedback to student council members

Parents and Families

Parents and families

- provide parental perspectives that complement teacher skills
- monitor homework and school projects
- promote attendance, punctuality, and instill a positive attitude towards education
- volunteer at school activities
- assist school organizations
- provide information about their child's beliefs, values, and preferred learning styles
- provide information about their culture and family beliefs
- teach and learn as true partners in the educational process
- provide suggestions for successful schools

As the first teachers in their children's lives, parents and families pave the way for successful school experiences. Parent and family involvement in a child's life experience has a great effect on school learning and achievement. Beyond the essential bond of parent and child that is so critical for physical and social, and intellectual well-being is the need for co-operative interaction with other people.

Teachers and Student Support Teams

Teachers are often the first contacts that parents and family members have with the school. Teachers play a critical role in creating learning environments that support the students' needs as they become actively involved in their own learning. Teachers and student support teams provide services directly or indirectly to students.

Student support teams may include

- homeroom teachers
- classroom teachers
- subject area teachers
- support teachers such as resource teachers, special education teachers, and school counsellors
- clinicians such as psychologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, mental health workers and social workers
- educational assistants

The role of teachers and members of student support teams includes

- treating students with dignity, kindness, and respect
- informing parents about matters related to educating their children
- serving on the school partnership council
- providing assistance to teacher representatives on the council
- supporting the school partnership council
- promoting a collaborative model of decision making
- communicating information to colleagues
- listening carefully to parents
- providing a learning environment where the challenges of new learning are accepted

School Leaders

Principals have a strong influence on how parents, families, and communities are welcomed to the school system. They have the capacity to create environments that support students, educators, parents, families, and communities.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society envisions a public education system that provides equal accessibility and equal opportunity for all children, that optimizes the potential of all students as individuals and citizens, that fosters lifelong learning, and that ensures a safe learning environment respectful of diversity and human dignity. (MTS)

The role of the Principal is to

- assist in the establishment of a school partnership council to advise the school on matters of policy, procedure, and school priorities
- facilitate communication among all school-related councils and the school
- implement local school policies and those of the school division and Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth
- promote co-operation between the school and community through consistent mission and vision
- consider and respond to the parents' views on school issues
- encourage parental involvement in the school planning process
- involve parents, families, and the community in the development of school plans, community reports, and grant submissions

Advisory Councils

ACSLs were established in legislation to support collaborative educational processes, by involving parents and community members in important matters of the local school and school board. Members of the ACSL represent the parents within the school community and may advise on the following matters:

- school policies, activities, and organization
- fundraising activities
- the process of hiring and assigning principals
- the annual school budget
- development of an annual school plan
- a school review as directed by the Minister of Education, Citizenship and Youth or the school board

Parent Councils

Parents, families, and communities add another dynamic to school partnerships. Operating within an educational partnership, parents, families, and communities have the opportunity to be more involved in the education of children as individuals and as representatives of partnership councils. The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) is the provincial voice for parents and parent councils.

The role of the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils is to

- provide resources and services to member parent councils such as: book/video library loans, workshops, conferences, help with writing a constitution, information on the roles and responsibilities of PAC members, and the services of the Advocacy Project to assist in resolving issues

"True commitment and understanding of the need of parental involvement from all partners fosters a positive school community relationship." (MAPC)

- represent parents on Department of Education committees such as: curriculum steering committees and document development
- keep parents updated on current events using a published newsletter several times each year
- participate in consultations for new provincial initiatives

School Superintendents

Superintendents ensure that all families and communities have the opportunity to be meaningfully involved in their children's education.

Superintendents perform the supervisory management duties required to facilitate parent, family, and community involvement in the school system. They have the responsibility to provide leadership in implementing the Public Schools Act and its regulations as well as provincial and ministerial directives.

The role of the Superintendent is to

- communicate with parents and the community to build awareness and understanding of the purposes and value of public education
- provide ways for parents and the community to have a respected voice and opportunity to develop and support educational opportunities for children
- be accountable to parents and the community by providing a clear vision, transparency of operations, and sharing educational outcomes

School Trustees

Trustees, as community members, are elected by their communities to represent parents and families at the school division level. Their role is to establish policy that supports meaningful parent, family, and community involvement, student learning, and school programs and services.

The role of a trustee is to

- establish a welcoming and inclusive environment that values the diverse perspectives of parents and community members
- implement processes to ensure regular and clear communications with parents and communities about priorities and outcomes within the school division
- create opportunities for parent and community input into policy development and decision making at the school and divisional levels
- provide a school division perspective that recognizes educational partnerships

The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents endorses the concept that parent and family involvement in the operation of school divisions is essential if the school division and the community are to maintain mutual confidence and respect, and work together to improve the quality of education for all students. (MASS)

Manitoba school boards believe that educating our children is a shared responsibility. Parents, communities, and schools are critical partners in helping our students to learn and to succeed in life. (MAST)

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth

“Parents and families are critical to students’ educational success. More community groups want to have a role in setting the direction of education and training in Manitoba, creating pressures for inclusive and participatory decision-making processes.” (MECY)

The role of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is to

- prioritize school, family, and community involvement in school affairs
- strongly encourage schools and school divisions to include parents, families, and communities in all aspects of planning relating to teaching and learning
- consult with educational partners including parents and community members
- support organizations that represent parents and community members at the school level
- provide resources to schools that assist in strengthening school, family, and community involvement

APPENDIX C: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

(School Administration: Rights and Responsibilities of Parents. Legislative Reference: The Public Schools Act, Sections 58.6–58.8)

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE

- *The Public Schools Act*, Sections 58.6–58.8
- *The Parental Responsibility Act* (possible application only where damage is to non-school property)

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

A person who is a resident in Manitoba is entitled to enrol his or her child in a program in any public school in Manitoba (subject to Schools of Choice and program not offered locally provisions) and to:

- a) be informed regularly of the attendance, behaviour, and academic achievement of his or her child in school
- b) consult with his or her child's teacher or other employee of the school division or school district about the child's program and academic achievement
- c) have access to his or her child's student file, subject to conditions
- d) receive information about programs available to his or her child
- e) be informed of the discipline and behaviour management policies of the school or school division or school district and to be consulted before the policies are established or revised
- f) be a member of an advisory council, local school committee or school committee at his or her child's school
- g) accompany his or her child and assist him or her to make representations to the school board before a decision is made to expel the child

A parent of a child of compulsory school age or who is attending school shall

- a) cooperate fully with the child's teachers and other employees of the school division or school district to ensure the child complies with school and school division or school district student discipline and behaviour management policies
- b) take all reasonable measures to ensure the child attends school regularly
- c) assume responsibility jointly and severally with their child where school division property is damaged by the intentional or negligent act of that child in accordance with Section 58.8 of *The Public Schools Act*
- d) have the right to form an ACSL (or at least have an establishment meeting) where a petition has been signed by 10 or more parents

Note: Legislation defines 'parent' as including the legal guardian.

The Parental Responsibility Act

This legislation, unique in Canada, allows the owner of property which has been deliberately taken, damaged or destroyed by a child (up to 18 years of age) to bring an action to recover that property loss, up to a maximum of \$7,500.00, from the parent of that child. Such property loss may be pursued through an action against the parents, filed in small claims court. Although there is an expanded definition of 'parent', the Act does not impose liability on Child and Family Service agencies with respect to damage caused by children who are their wards.

This legislation may be available in a school context where the property taken or destroyed by a child does not belong to the school division (e.g., property of teachers, students, etc.).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- Education Administration Services: 945-6899
- Manitoba Justice: 945-3594 or 1-800-282-8069, extension 3594
- Your Local School Division Office

See also: Pupil File

Right to Attend School

Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Schools of Choice

Transportation Eligibility

APPENDIX D: ADVISORY COUNCILS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP REGULATION

(Advisory Councils for School Leadership Regulation, Man. Reg. 54/96)

SECTION	REGULATION
Application	The regulation does not apply to Division scolaire franco-manitobaine or Frontier School Division. The regulation applies to all other schools/school divisions and districts including independent schools and one-school school districts.
Role of advisory council	<p>An advisory council may</p> <p>Advise the principal about school policies, activities and organization, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department and locally developed curricula Cultural and extra-curricular activities Student discipline and behaviour management policies Community access to school facilities <p>Advise the principal about fund-raising and participate in fund-raising activities</p> <p>Advise the school board about the process of hiring and assigning principals</p> <p>Advise the school board about an annual budget for the school</p> <p>Participate in developing an annual school plan</p> <p>Participate in any review of the school that the minister or the school board has directed to be carried out</p> <p>An advisory council shall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with parents of children attending the school and community members so that it can properly represent their priorities and concerns; and Establish a means whereby it is regularly accountable to the school and community for its activities and expenditures <p>An advisory council is to perform its role within the framework of responsibilities and powers conferred on school boards, principals and teachers under the Public Schools Act and The Education Administration Act</p>
Election of Members	<p>Individuals eligible to vote</p> <p>Parents of children attending the school and community members</p> <p>There must be at least seven persons in attendance at the meeting who are entitled to vote in order to elect an advisory council.</p>
Continuation of an existing parent council	<p>Continuation of an existing parent council</p> <p>The Regulation does not apply to parent councils. The structure and the activities of the parent council must conform to any policies that the school board may have about such councils.</p> <p>The school may have either an advisory council or a parent council, but not both.</p>

SECTION	REGULATION
<p>Membership</p>	<p>Parents 2/3 of advisory council.</p> <p>Community members 1/3 of advisory council.</p> <p>Teachers and staff of the school or the division who are also parents of children attending the school or community members may comprise not more than 1/3 of the total number of members. This number may be increased to ½ of the total number of members.</p> <p>If the school includes S1 to S4 and has a student council, the president of the student council, or another member of the student council chosen by the student council, is automatically a community member of the advisory council and included in the total number of members of the council.</p> <p>The principal and a teacher representative from the school, selected by the teachers of the school, are ex officio non-voting members of the advisory council.</p> <p>An advisory council must consist of at least seven members.</p> <p>The minister may, on application, exempt a school from any of the requirements set out in subsection 9(1) to (4) if the school is a small school as defined in the Support to School.</p>
<p>Officers</p>	<p>Each advisory council must have a chairperson, a secretary and any other officers required by the by-laws of the advisory council.</p>
<p>Meetings</p>	<p>In each year after the year in which an advisory council is established, an annual general meeting of the advisory council must be held after the first day of school but not later than the third Friday in October.</p> <p>An advisory council must hold regular meetings that are open to parents of children attending the school, students, school staff and community members.</p> <p>Only members of the advisory council are entitled to vote on matters raised at a meeting of the council.</p>
<p>By-laws</p>	<p>The constitution takes the form of the Regulation in the case of an advisory council.</p> <p>An advisory council may make by-laws governing its proceedings and generally for the conduct and management of its activities.</p>
<p>Dissolution</p>	<p>The minister may dissolve an advisory council if the minister is of the opinion, after ensuring that review has been conducted, that the council is not functioning in accordance with this regulation or in the best interest of the school.</p>
<p>Saving</p>	<p>A group of persons established as an advisory council in the 94-95 or 95-96 school year before this regulation comes into force and is in compliance with the Guidelines for Advisory Councils for School Leadership is deemed as an advisory council established under this regulation.</p>

APPENDIX E: WEBSITES OF EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MANITOBA

1. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
<www.ascd.org/>
2. Computer Education Coordinators of Manitoba (CECM)
<www.cecm.winnipeg.mb.ca/>
3. Council of School Leaders of the Manitoba Teachers' Society (COSL)
<www.cosl.mb.ca>
4. Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC)
<www.mapc.mb.ca/>
5. Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS)
<www.mass.mb.ca/>
6. Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST)
<www.mast.mb.ca/>
7. Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools Inc. (MFIS)
<www.mfis.mb.ca/>
8. Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP)
<www.msip.ca/>
9. Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)
<www.mbteach.org/>
10. Special Area Groups (SAGs)
<www.mbteach.org/sag.htm>
11. Student Services Administration Association of Manitoba (SSAAM)
<www.ssaam.mb.ca/>
12. The Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)
<www.masbo.ca/>

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Accountability: Accepting responsibility for performing one's assigned responsibilities.

Agenda: A point form plan of the order of events of a meeting.

Budget: A council takes responsibility for a budget or financial record. It usually covers a one-year period and includes a description of how funds will be used.

Code of Ethics: A guide to behaviour based upon the acceptable morals, values and principles that set a standard.

Collaboration: Working together toward agreed upon goals within school policies and practices.

Consultation: An exchange of correspondence, a meeting, an exchange of ideas and information, or an opportunity for input before a decision is made. Good practice also includes providing feedback after the decision is made.

Consensus: A widespread agreement in opinion that is reached only when all members involved in the decision-making process are in agreement.

Goal: Selected school improvements and changes and long-range planning consistent with the school's vision and mission statement.

Mission Statement: A clear statement of the school partnership council's purpose and the school's educational purpose with a focus on students.

School Community: The school community includes several constituents, including business, cultural organizations, government services (local, provincial, federal), social agencies, job-training services, recreational services, and health services.

School Partnership Council: In Manitoba, a school partnership council may be an Advisory Council for School Leadership (ACSL), a Parent Advisory Council (PAC), a Home and School Association (HSA), or a School Committee (SC).

Vision: A statement that clearly describes the future that everyone will work toward.

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REFERENCES

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Printed in Canada
Imprimé au Canada