

**Prince George
District Parent Advisory Council**

Internal Policy

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A. CODE OF CONDUCT

ROLE - A parent who accepts a position as a DPAC executive officer:

1. Works cooperatively to fulfill the goals of the DPAC.
2. Upholds the constitution and bylaws, policies and procedures of the DPAC.
3. Is willing to review her/his work with other executive officers and the general members.

DECISION-MAKING - A parent who accepts a position as a DPAC executive officer:

1. Works to ensure the well being of students is the primary focus of all decisions.
2. Expresses concerns about proposed actions while they are under consideration, to be taken into account before a decision is made. A different perspective may help the group realize an action may have consequences that had not been anticipated.
3. Supports executive decisions, in spite of personal concerns or reservations.

INTERPERSONAL CONDUCT - A parent who accepts a position as a DPAC executive officer:

1. Respects the rights of all individuals.
2. Performs her/his duties with honesty and integrity.
3. Speaks and acts towards other officers with respect and dignity, mindful of other officers' rights and sensibilities.
4. Strives to be informed and only passes on information that is reliable.
5. Directs any criticism of the action of other executive officers to that officer first, and then if necessary, after informing that executive officer, may direct the criticism in confidence to the Chairperson and/or Vice-Chairperson.
6. Encourages and supports parents and students with individual concerns to act on their own behalf and provides information on the process for taking forward concerns.
7. Respects all confidential information.
8. Works to ensure that issues are resolved through due process.

PRESENTATION TO THE PUBLIC - A parent who accepts a position as a DPAC executive officer:

1. Supports public education.
2. Represents the PAC members' perspective, to partner groups in education, focusing on the best interests of students.
3. Recognizes that membership lists are confidential, unless permission has been obtained from each of the DPAC reps listed.
4. Directs requests for statements on behalf of the DPAC to the Chairperson. The Chairperson is the official spokesperson for the DPAC.

Approved: Apr. 7, 2003

B. DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

1. All concerns about DPAC Executive members, verbal and written, will be received by the Chair. In the event the concern relates to the Chair, the concern will be directed to the Vice-Chair or another Executive member. For the purposes of this process the person acting on the concern is named the Chairperson.
2. Upon receiving the concern, the Chairperson will work to clarify the concern, determine if and how the Code of Ethics has been breached and facilitate the resolution process.
3. Every attempt will be made to resolve the concern in a timely manner.
4. As a first step, the person bringing the concern forward will be encouraged to inform the person in question of their concern and to discuss the problem with intent to reaching resolution.
5. If resolution is not reached between the parties, the Chairperson will enter the discussion, with the intent to facilitate a positive resolution.
6. The Chairperson may request the participation of other executive members in the process.
7. If the parties cannot agree on resolution, the Chairperson makes a recommendation to the parties. The recommendation may be that the matter be closed.
8. Either of the parties may appeal the decision of the Chairperson, to the DPAC Executive as a whole. The appeal must be in writing within 30 days of being notified of the decision.

Approved: June 2001

C. PERCEIVED BIAS

1. RATIONALE:

DPAC expresses the views of the parents in this school district. Parents bring a special expertise to the process of determining the educational goals, policies and services provided for their children.

2. DEFINITIONS:

- 2.1 **Conflict of Interest** refers to a situation in which an individual or his/her immediate family could benefit monetarily from a decision of this DPAC, which that individual can influence or vote upon.
- 2.2 **Perception of Bias** refers to a situation that may exist if an individual who represents the DPAC is also an employee or elected official of any school district. There may be a perception that he or she is not speaking solely in the interest of parents and this may diminish the power of what is said.

3. POLICY:

- 3.1 **Conflict of Interest** - individuals must refrain from discussing, influencing and voting upon any matter before this DPAC which they or their families have a monetary interest.
- 3.2 **Perceived Bias** - the voice of this DPAC must clearly be, and must be perceived to be, that of the parents of this school district. Individuals who may be in a situation of "perceived bias" by virtue of another role they hold in the educational system must avoid functions within this DPAC which involve REPRESENTATION of the parent voice. Members who have concerns regarding conflict of interest or perceived bias should refer those concerns to the DPAC Executive.

Approved: June 2001

D. PERFORMANCE MEETINGS

1. AGENDA DESIGN.

1.1 Agenda planning efforts will be governed by the DPAC's mandate. With this in mind, the Executive will establish a purpose for all meetings:

- What decisions must be made?
- What questions need collective answers?
- How will the DPAC's mandate be advanced?
- What returns will there be on the investment (time, money, and effort) in the meeting?

1.2 The agenda will include a balance of reactive components (dictated by outside constraints or statutory requirements) and proactive components (long range planning issues).

1.3 DPAC reps are encouraged to offer agenda items (prior to the meeting); the Executive will decide, after assessment, whether a proposed item is appropriate, when it will be addressed and how much time will be allocated to it. The assessment will review:

- How important is this item?
- How relevant is it to the DPAC's mandate?
- How ready is it for discussion and decision making?
- Is it urgent, or can it be delayed until a future meeting?
- Is this an issue for a DPAC decision or one that the Executive should decide (operational matter)?

Late additions to the agenda will be the exception and not the rule.

1.4 Each agenda item will indicate: Is it only for **information**? Does it require **discussion** and **decision** making? If so, what are the options for decision making?

1.5 PRE-MEETING PACKAGE. A pre-meeting package will be distributed to the members at least one week before the meeting. It will include the agenda and any reports and attachments. Circulation of last minute documents at the meeting will be minimal.

1.6 PROCESSING AGENDA ITEMS. The Chair will simply ask if there are any corrections to the previous minutes, there is no need for a motion to approve. If no corrections, the Chair will declare the minutes "approved as circulated." If there are corrections, the Chair will ascertain what the group believes to be accurate and, after all corrections have been made, declare the minutes "approved as corrected."

1.7 A "Report with no recommendations" is presented for information only. There will be no motion "to receive a report".. The report should have been circulated prior to the meeting. The report giver may want to briefly highlight certain items. The Chair will then ask if there are any questions, and then say: "The report will be placed on file."

- 1.8 A "Report with recommendations" will be presented, and the proposed recommendations will be introduced. The motions, and not the report, will be debated and voted on.
- 1.9 If an issue is **complex or controversial**, it may be wise to discuss the problem before exploring solutions. Such issues should be dealt with as follows:
- Define the problem
 - Establish criteria for solutions
 - Search for solutions (creativity is encouraged; no ideas are assessed yet)
 - Evaluate solutions
 - Select the best solution
 - Establish the implementation plan.

2. DISCUSSION GUIDELINES.

- 2.1. On each debatable issue a member will be entitled to speak a second time after everyone who wishes to, has had a chance to speak once.
- 2.2. **CONTROVERSY.** The Chair will attempt to determine whether escalation in a debate is due to concerns about the process or the proposal. The process concerns should be addressed before attempting to force resolution on the proposal (even if indications are that a vote would give approval).

3. DPAC REP'S **PARTICIPATION BETWEEN MEETINGS.** A DPAC rep should:

- Report back to their PAC on the DPAC meeting
- Gather the PAC's views on issues to bring forward to the DPAC
- Review documents relevant to the meeting.
- Suggest items that should be included on the next meeting agenda.
- Complete all tasks volunteered for as early as possible.
- Raise concerns with those who can take corrective action.
- Offer constructive feedback to the Chair on her or his facilitation style.

DPAC REP'S **PARTICIPATION DURING MEETINGS.** A DPAC rep should:

- Attend all DPAC and committees meetings volunteered for.
- Arrive on time, and be there for the duration – in body and spirit.
- If you tend to hold back - try to speak up more often and offer insights and ideas.
- Those that tend to dominate - learn to hold back comments and listen more often.
- Raise valid concerns, even at the risk of sounding stupid or being unpopular.
- Give yourself permission to question the status quo or conventional wisdom.
- When *opposing* an initiative, be prepared to *propose* alternatives.
- Insist on the clarity of proposals, especially when votes are taken.
- Help introduce a light touch, especially when people are taking things too seriously.

4. CHAIRING – The Chair will:

- **decide who speaks next:** by who raised their hand first, not their voice. Will intervene if members “barge in” without permission or if they interrupt.
- **establish decorum:** encourage civility and mutual respect – ensuring the discussion is on the issues, not the people.
- **keep the meeting on track:** giving reminders of what’s on the agenda and intervening if there are digressions.
- **manage the time:** facilitate collective decisions on the meeting’s time frame, and if needed, on time limits on speeches; give updates on the time; asking (at appropriate times) whether anyone has something to add to the discussion and if not, proceeding to closure.
- **educate and advise on process:** suggest, instead of rushing a motion, the members amend it, postpone it, or refer it to a committee for study; help members craft motions and substantive amendments; suggest “nit-picking” amendments be avoided.
- **create balance:** ask dominant members to give priority to those who have not spoken; create opportunities for quieter members to enter discussion.
- **ensure clarity:** repeat motions periodically and again before they are voted on.
- **encourage listening:** minimize back and forth arguments; encourage members to hear one another prior to forming a rebuttal; discourage dismissal of unusual ideas or ones that did not work in the past.
- **question:** listen for ambiguities, missed points, generalizations and misunderstanding, and raise appropriate questions.
- **re-direct:** shift the discussion from complaints and accusations to constructive channels; encourage members who *oppose* to *propose* an alternative.
- **summarize:** briefly repeat key points and concerns raised, and highlight apparent areas of agreement and disagreement.
- **facilitate closure and follow-up:** articulate the proposal being voted on, ensure it is understood, and then take a vote; facilitate assignment of follow-up duties ; and confirm the secretary is able to record the decisions made.

5. RULES OF ORDER.

- 5.1. The fundamental purpose of Rules of Order is to facilitate progress, not to impede it. They should have the effect of entrenching the principles of fairness, equality and common sense, and of enabling the members to participate in discussions and decision making on a level playing field. The following approach is relatively simple, flexible and user-friendly.
- 5.2. GOVERNING DOCUMENTS define the DPAC’s framework and establish how our meetings should run.
 2. Laws of the land: Society’s Act (after registering).
 3. Bylaws.
 4. Meeting procedures or rulebook: Robert’s Rules of Order (Newly Revised).
- 5.3. COLLECTIVE DECISIONS will be made during a duly held meeting, where a quorum is present (10 voting delegates).

5.4. VOTING METHODS

5.4.1. Voting can be **informal** (without a motion) or **formal** (with or without a motion). Votes without a motion will be determined informally by "unanimous consent" (Chair will ask if members agree to a proposed action and in the absence of any objections, directs the action be taken.) This will be used mainly for routine and non-controversial decisions.

5.4.2. Formal votes will be taken by a show of hands. Votes will be taken when there are differences of opinion or when a substantive proposal is voted on. A formal vote can be taken with or without a motion being made, but care will always be taken to ensure the proposal is clear and fully understood.

5.4.3. A tie vote means that a majority has not been obtained and the proposal is defeated.

6. SIX STEPS OF MAKING MOTIONS:

6.1. A member **makes the motion** "*I move that we...*" The mover will first have to be recognized to speak by the Chair. The mover cannot speak against the motion, but can vote against it.

6.2. Another member **seconds** "*I second the motion*". This only means agreeing to a discussion, not that the seconder agrees with the motion. A member could second a motion because he or she is against it and would like to see the group go on record as defeating it. Therefore, the name of the seconder will not be recorded.

6.3. The Chair **states the motion** "*It is moved and seconded that... Any discussion?*" The stating of the motion now makes it the property of the members, not the mover. The members have the authority to amend, withdraw or postpone the motion, or refer it to a committee (by a majority vote). The mover has no special rights except to speak on the motion first (no right to speak last).

6.4. The motion is **debated** and amended: for clarity, members should be encouraged to preface their comments by saying "I speak in favour of (or against) this proposal" (or "I have mixed feelings about it"). *They should outline their reasons in point form, then briefly recap. They will be encouraged to be brief and to the point, minimizing repetition.*

6.5. The Chair puts the motion to a **vote** "Discussion is now closed, let's vote. The motion is that _____. Those in favour of the motion raise your hands. Thank you. Those opposed raise your hands. Thank you."

6.6. The Chair announces the **result** "The motion is carried (or defeated). (ACTION by whom and when). The next item of business is..."

7. REVISITING MOTIONS: An adopted or defeated proposal can be re-visited to address new circumstances or information not known at the time the original decision was made. An adopted motion will be revisited only if the action (or part of it) can be reversed or modified.

E. MINUTES

1. RATIONALE:

- 1.1. The DPAC secretary is responsible for the minutes of the organization, both the meetings of the Membership and those of the Executive.
- 1.2. Minutes are a written record of the meetings. Accurate minutes are of vital importance, as they constitute the permanent record of proposals, decisions, actions and reports of the Membership.
- 1.3. Minutes are the legal record of the meetings of the Membership and may be subpoenaed. Minutes shall be written as concisely as possible.

2. FORM OF THE MINUTES

- 2.1. HEADING – “Prince George DPAC Meeting (or Executive Meeting)”, location and the date.
- 2.2. ATTENDANCE: A list of those in attendance, who chaired the meeting and the name of the minute taker shall be recorded.
- 2.3. MOTIONS: Motions made during the meeting are the only items that will be recorded verbatim. The rest of the minutes are an objective summation of what occurred. The minutes shall record:
 - a. brief pros and cons, raised during discussion of important or contentious items
 - b. any new information
 - c. all motions, verbatim
 - d. the name of the mover of a motion
 - e. results of motions (carried, defeated, postponed)
 - f. expected actions (who, what, when)

The minutes shall not record:

- a. the seconder of a motion
- b. speaker's experiences
- c. redundant information
- d. withdrawn motions
- e. personal comments
- f. counts of votes

SAMPLE:

MOVED by John Smith

THAT the DPAC executive purchase a fax machine, at a cost of no more than \$300, taxes included.

Discussion: Pros...

Cons...

CARRIED.

ACTION: Chair will purchase the fax machine by the end of June, 20__."

- 2.4. REPORTS: The minutes will not record details of reports, but shall record the name of the person giving a report and any related action to be taken. Written reports shall be attached to the minutes.

F. REPRESENTATION ON EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

DPAC believes in the importance of parent representation on external committees, i.e. School Board standing committees and ad hoc committees.

1. References:
 - 1.1 Bylaw 9.4 "The Executive may appoint representatives to external committees or in liaison positions to external organizations."
 - 1.2 DPAC Internal Policy C.3.2 "Individuals who may be in a situation of "perceived bias" by virtue of another role they hold in the educational system must avoid functions within this DPAC which involve REPRESENTATION of the parent voice."
 - 1.3 DPAC Internal Policy C.3.1 "Conflict of Interest - individuals must refrain from discussing, influencing and voting upon any matter before this DPAC which they or their families have a monetary interest."
2. Appointment of Representatives:
 - 2.1 Parents, nominated by their PAC, who are interested in being a DPAC representative shall complete and submit an External Committee Volunteer Form. Forms will be held on file.
 - 2.2 Upon notice being received from the SB or other agencies requesting parent representation for a committee, or annually for standing committees, the Executive will:
 - 2.2.1 forward notification (via email, fax, website notice and/or at a DPAC meeting) to all PACs
 - 2.2.2 allow one month for PAC Chairpersons to take the notice to their members
 - 2.2.3 request that interested parents submit an External Committee Volunteer Form, which includes nomination by their PAC
 - 2.2.4 review all volunteer forms, both on file and newly submitted
 - 2.2.5 meet to select appropriate candidate(s) based on relevant previous involvement and experience, past performance, experience representing parents, and related education and training.
 - 2.1.5.1 In the event the School District does not reimburse expenses, selection of a candidate may also be based on DPAC budgetary considerations.
 - 2.2.6 Notify the chosen candidate, the SB or other agency, and the DPAC membership
3. Responsibilities of Representatives:
 - 3.1 Attend all meetings or, if unable to attend, inform the Executive well in advance.
 - 3.2 Attend DPAC General Meetings.

- 3.3 Bring a district perspective to the committee table.
 - 3.4 Notify DPAC of issues / topics to be discussed in committee.
 - 3.5 Gather input from DPAC members as needed, with agreement of the Executive.
 - 3.6 Submit a written report to DPAC within two weeks of attending a meeting.
 - 3.7 Notify DPAC in writing upon resignation from the committee.
4. Expenses:
- 4.1 Travel expenses for meetings may be reimbursed by the School District. It is the representative's responsibility to acquire the necessary expense forms and submit them as per District guidelines.
5. Representation Review:
- 5.1 Committee representation will be reviewed by the Executive:
 - 5.1.1 if a representative's responsibilities are not being met
 - 5.1.2 at the expiration of the term of appointment
 - 5.1.3 when a representative resigns
 - 5.1.4 annually for Standing Committees.

Approved Mar. 3, 2003