

SD57 WORKING TOGETHER

Best Practices Handbook

for School Principals and PACs with the support of SD57 Senior Administration and DPAC



School District No. 57
(Prince George)



School District No. 57, its schools and school communities are located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation. We honour and respect the beautiful ancestral lands, cultures and people of the Lheidli T'enneh, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation through the work that we do with our communities.

Further, this acknowledgment, gratitude and respect extends to all the First Nations communities on whose traditional territories School District No. 57 (SD57), School District No. 57 District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), and school Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) build relationships with.

This document was created with the collaboration between the District Parent Advisory, the Office of the Superintendent and School Principals. June 2022 / June 2024 / January 2025

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information, support, tools, and guidance for parents, Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), school leaders, and School District No. 57 (SD57) Senior Administration. It is meant to help build meaningful, collaborative, inclusive and respectful working relationships in our schools and school communities.

While this document focuses on strategies and resources to help school PACs and Principals/Vice Principals to develop better working relationships to improve student's educational experiences and outcomes, the information in this handbook will support a number of other people and roles working within our schools and school communities.

Background

In 2021, SD57 DPAC (District Parent Advisory Council) and Senior Team members collaboratively identified inconsistencies at various schools within SD No. 57 with regards to how Principal/Vice Principal and PACs understand their roles in working together to achieve the best outcomes for students in our school communities. As a result of conversations on how to best support school leaders and Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), the decision was made to develop a working group comprised of SD57 Senior Administration, Principals, and SD57 DPAC Executive Members to develop a handbook with the goal of supporting Principal/Vice Principal and PACs in their working relationships moving forward.

PACs are the collective voice of parents in school community who have the legislative right to advise school leadership on any matter relating to public education and whose role is to support parents. All parents/guardians/caregivers with children registered in K-12 are members of their school PAC as per the [School Act](#). The PAC executive are those individuals, per the PAC Constitution and Bylaws, who have been elected by their peers to represent them and to conduct business on their behalf. PAC meetings are for parents of children at that school. The Principal/Vice Principal and staff representatives can attend PAC meetings as regular invited guests (however they *cannot* vote). Similarly, PAC executives should be meeting regularly with their school administrators and can request to be present at staff meetings as needed to share information, inform, and answer questions.

For more information on parents' role as public stakeholders in education click on the following [BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils](#) website.

Working Together

Values

We all want what is best for students in public education and have different roles to play to make the learning environment in schools and the district the best it can be. The values in the School District [Strategic Plan](#) are a starting place to guide interactions and activities of a PAC and the Principal/Vice Principal as they work together to improve outcomes for students.

Vision

All students are prepared for each step of their life's journey with the skills, knowledge, options, and choices to be successful.

We will work towards this vision with the shared values of Community, Transparency, Integrity, Respect, Inclusion, and Equity.

Responsibilities

1. Principal/Vice Principal have the responsibility to ensure that the school operations and spending align with the School Growth Plans, the District's Strategic Plan, and Ministry of Education and Childcare guidelines/policies.
2. DPAC and school PACs have the responsibility to represent the parent voice in decisions related to education and funding to support public education. They use their resources to support student success and contribute to the enhancement of school experiences for children.
3. The Principal is responsible for maintaining a safe and orderly environment within the school building.

The more collaboration, the better the relationship, the more likely the PAC will function to support the school goals and culture.

What facilitates this?

- Communication
- Positive working relationships
- Respect for different spheres of influence and perspective
- Growth mindset

Roles

There are several key and important groups within our schools and school communities whose purposes and roles are often not well understood. These have been listed below along with details on who they are, what their job is, and what their roles are.

❖ School Principal and Vice Principal

- Principal/Vice Principal are referred to as lead learners and instructional leaders: we work with teachers to plan, implement, and assess the curriculum.
- Committed to building and nurturing a positive and inclusive learning environment.
- There are many managerial and operational aspects to the role that support student achievement including communication with parents and the community, attendance, timetabling and supervision, school safety, staffing, school budget, special needs, and teaching resources.
- Ensure that students arrive safely at school.
- Talk with and interact with the students.
- Meet with teaching and support staff.
- Manage facility issues relating to the building, the fields and grounds, the parking lot, and all equipment.
- Monitor the general safety of the building.
- Ensure that students are adequately supervised.

- Respond to Board of Education and the Ministry of Education and Childcare directives.
- Collaborate with colleagues on School, District and Board issues
- Duties and responsibilities under provincial law and Board of Education policies
 - Providing a safe and welcoming learning environment
 - Ensuring the delivery and assessment of the curriculum
 - Maintaining stakeholder relationships
 - Ensuring that resources are delegated effectively
 - Supporting the professional development activities of the staff

❖ **PACs and PAC members**

All parents/guardians/caregivers with children registered in K-12 are members of their school PAC as per the [School Act](#). The PAC executive are those individuals, per the school PAC Bylaws, who have been elected by their peers to represent them and to conduct business on their behalf.

- The PAC advise the school Principal/Vice Principal on any matter relating to public education, support parents as per the [BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils \(BCCPAC\)](#).
- Are the official collective voice of the parents/guardians/caregivers of the school community.
- ALL parents, all students, equitably by actions and funding.
- Composed of, run, and managed by parents.
- May advise school staff/Board of Education respecting any matter relating to the school or provincial education.
- Advise the Principal/Vice Principal and staff on parents' views and feedback about school programs, policies, plans, and activities.
- Communicate with parents, and to promote co-operation between the home and the school in providing support for the education of children.
- Encourage parent involvement in the school, and to support programs that promote parent involvement.
- Organize PAC activities and events and endeavor to provide parent education.
- To advise and participate in the activities of the DPAC.
- Key Information: It is important to note that DPACs and PACs are not obligated to engage in fundraising activities. Each PAC has the opportunity to utilize gaming grants, which can provide extracurricular support for students. Please refer to the provided link to learn more about the available grant amounts and permissible usage [Community Gaming Grants - PAC and DPAC Program Guidelines](#).
- PAC meeting structure is up to the PAC to serve the interests of the parents. School staff can be invited to all or part of the meeting.

❖ District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

- Recognized in the [School Act](#) , Section 8.4, 8.5 and is the official representative body of parents/guardians of children in district.
- The School Act provides DPACs the power to advise the board of education respecting any matter relating to education within the district including educational policy.
- Composed of, run, and managed by parents.
- Comprised of elected parent representatives from PACs and serve as an umbrella organization for District PAC.
- Assist parents in forming a PAC in every school.
- Assist members in obtaining information and communicating with district personnel.
- Help parents navigate the school system locally.
- Advocate for parental involvement in the education system.
- Support and encourage PACs and parents in accessing the school system at all levels by providing regular forums for the exchange of ideas and information to ensure that public education serves the best interests of all students.

Planning Your Year

Preamble: This guidebook is best practices to create transparency and foster collaboration between schools and parents and PACs. This schedule may be followed and offers a variety of subject matter with recommended timing.

Monthly Calendar of Agenda Items for PACs and School Principals

Below is a guideline of topics and agenda items to consider for discussion throughout the school year. These topics are suggestions but were compiled based on outcomes from a collaborative PAC, parent and School Administrators working group and identified as key to developing great working relationships for all three stakeholders.

August/September - Getting Ready for Back to School

- Contact your school PAC executive to organize a "back to school touch base" meeting/conversation before the start of school (can be virtual or in-person based on everyone's preferences).
 - All school PACs have an SD57 email address to help improve and standardize communication channels – if you are unsure of your school PACs email address, please reach out to SD57 Senior Administration or DPAC.
- Principal/Vice Principal should share the process they would like to use to advertise PAC events/meetings on the school website.
- Principal/Vice Principal and PAC should agree on the procedures they would like to use for money and document collection.
- If the PAC is considering supporting schools through gaming funds or other methods, it is important to have discussions with the Principal to determine the best approach. This ensures that the goals of the PAC and the school are aligned.
- PACs are discouraged from funding items and programs that should be supported within the school budget, even if it is extra-curricular.
- School Principal / Vice Principal-should share draft budget and organization for the year.

- o This is the School Organization for the school year as it may have changed since the Spring.
 - o Share the school calendar to discuss the year's timeline.
- Review PAC meeting dates and times for the upcoming year and ensure information is put into the school and Principal/Vice Principal calendars.
 - o Important to note when the PAC Annual General Meeting (AGM) date will be as details on the new PAC executive will be noted after elections.
 - o Review how PAC meetings will be held in the coming year (e.g. virtual, in person, hybrid).
 - o Determine what meeting supports or resources the PAC might need.
 - o Discuss how you would like to advertise PAC meetings to the parents. What can the school help with and what will PAC be responsible for (ex. PAC will provide minutes/agenda the day before the PAC meeting and the school will email with the meeting invitation to all parents).
- Discuss what communication channels will be used between PAC and Principal/Vice Principal.
 - o What communication will be done via email?
 - o Texting – will this be used, and if so by whom (e.g., PAC Chair to Principal/VP) and in what situations/circumstances (e.g., urgent decisions, changes/updates on meetings/events).
 - o Who will be checking emails and expectations for response times from both groups?
 - o Timeline and communication process for PAC meetings.
 - o Review Bylaw 4, which outlines the specific steps parents can follow to initiate a resolution process for any decisions that may arise. Familiarizing yourself with this bylaw will provide you with the necessary guidance on how to navigate and address any concerns or issues effectively within the established framework.
- [Bylaw 4 - Appeals to the Board](#)

 - Review the “Application for the Use of School Facilities – PAC Event” booking form for PAC meetings and other PAC events can be obtained from the school Principal.

September - Starting Back

- Review staffing levels and personnel.
- Share school organization details. Principal/Vice Principal should prepare and present the school budget summary charts available on MyBudgetFile. This is for PAC awareness as final School Organization is second week of September.
- Review current school year SPSS – pick one of the 4 directions - Truth and Reconciliation.
 - o Document feedback for future planning.
 - o Overview of the school budget (strategic plan goals and values).
- Principal/Vice Principal: Ask how you can support and help PAC in the upcoming year.
- PACs: Ask how the PAC can support the school Principal/Vice Principal in the upcoming year.
- Review PAC meeting and event dates and how those fit into school and staff schedule for the year

- o Ensure these are added to the PAC, school, and Principal/Vice Principal calendars.
- Review and clarify expectations of PAC for school Principal/Vice Principal and vice-versa.
 - o Identify the differences and commonalities.
 - o Identify where there are questions and concerns. Determine how these will be resolved.
- Discuss the plan for PAC spending – timelines and responsibilities.
- Secondary Schools can share the timetable and discuss complexities and strengths of the timetable.
- Secondary Schools can outline the course change process.
- Principal/Vice Principal should share the roles/responsibilities of the support staff within the school
- Discuss enrolment (Secondary) and opportunities available to students via different program offerings including dual credit and trades programs.
- Principal/Vice Principal can discuss how the school can help facilitate and communicate PAC events that are not school based.
- Review School Emergency Procedures.

October to December

- Review the [2021-2026 SD57 Strategic Plan](#) and [Implementation Plan](#), especially the School Plan for Student Success (SPSS) for your school.
 - o What does this mean for your school?
 - o What questions do PACs and parents have about the strategic plan?
 - o Identify how parents can support your local school plan (SPSS goals).
- Discuss Upcoming Communication of Student Learnings (CSL).
 - o Outline the process that parents should follow if they have concerns about their child's progress or program.
- Secondary/Elementary Schools – Invite PAC to have a table at Parent Night (if applicable).
- One final summary of staffing, enrolment, and budget from School Admins.
- Holiday performances.
- Parent-Teacher or Student-Led Conferences.
- Review current school year SPSS – pick one of the 4 directions – Wellness.
- Discuss FSAs and data – what does mean? Engage with school admin to understand and put context to the data.
- Finalize the PAC budget.
- Discuss events the PAC would like to plan, strategize timelines and roles.

January to April

- Communication of Student Learnings (CSL).
- Secondary – coordinate information with the Grad Planning parent group.
- Secondary – share the course selection and planning timeline.
- Elementary – share preliminary enrolment and class divisions for following school year.
- Discuss Data from the Student Learning Survey.
- Student-led Conferences.

- Kindergarten Registration and Student Transfer Information.
- Review current school year SPSS – pick one of the 4 directions - Equity of Access.

May and June

- Share summary of preliminary School Budget.
- Year End Assembly/Celebrations.
- Strategic Plan --- progress towards goals.
- Summative Reporting.
- Review current school year SPSS – pick one of the 4 directions – Learning.
- Discuss any planned changes for the fall in structures or programming.
- Discuss Transition plans for new students and departing students (K, Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 12).
- Invite PAC to Elementary Welcome to Kindergarten Events.
- PAC start planning for next year – goals, plan etc....
- If PAC is going to fundraise – look to have plans for September/October – discuss with the Principal.

Local School Plans for Student Success

Every school within SD57 must have an up-to-date individual school plan that is posted on their website. This school plan needs to align to the SD 57 Strategic Plan. More info can be found [here](#).

Parent Initiated Events - Non SD57 Approved PAC Events (Dry Grad, Proms)

Student events not approved by School District, such as Dry Grad, Proms or Elementary Grad events, do not fall under School District No. 57 insurance and cannot be booked in School District facilities. The space booking, insurance, and costs for these events will be handled/paid by the PAC and/or parent committee.

SD57 Approved PAC Events

School District No. 57 and the school administrator must authorize the use of school facilities for PAC events. This ensures that district policies are followed, room capacity limits are adhered to, extra facilities requests (i.e., tables/chairs, custodial) are organized, and all volunteers and participants are covered under liability insurance. Refer to the School Booking Form:

Application for the Use of School Facilities – PAC Event available in the school office.

School Use Bookings

School use bookings are bookings made by the school for school district authorized activities and are covered under the Schools Protection Plan (SPP) insurance. School district authorized activities include activities that are hosted and run by school staff in the interest of students. Other authorized groups or individuals may assist in the organization and running of these activities, but the main responsibility must remain with school staff. Some examples of this would be school sports, school clubs, school performances, parent teacher interview nights, school sports days, and school movie nights.

Parent Advisory Council Bookings

Parent Advisory Council (PAC) bookings are bookings made by elected PAC parents for school district authorized activities in connection with the school district and are covered under the Schools Protection Plan insurance. Some examples of this would be PAC meetings, PAC Executive meetings, and school district authorized PAC events where school district staff are primarily responsible for organizing and running the event.

A school use event, or PAC event with school staff primarily responsible for organizing and running the event, will be covered by SPP. Any other situation will require an insurance certificate.

Financials

PAC Spending Guidelines: PAC funds can be spent solely at the discretion of the PAC. Parents have the autonomy to spend the funds that they themselves have raised. Whenever possible, funds should be spent on the children in the school at the time of fundraising. Avoid holding back funds unless a specific project or purpose has been agreed upon.

Fundraising Rules and Resources: For more information on BC Gaming rules, fundraising rules, common fundraising programs, local business fundraising programs, [BC Gaming Grant Procedures for PACs](#). The financial records and cheque books must be kept in a secure location for other PAC members to access when the Treasurer is not available. The school office can provide a locked cabinet for a small amount of space for files.

Communication and Privacy

The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* [FIPPA](#) applies to students in school in School District No. 57. As a School District No. 57 Parent Advisory Council, it is important to understand your responsibilities under the Act.

Requirements for Communication and Privacy:

1. Physical documents such as copies of correspondence, or any other communication directly to or from students, parents, or guardians should be kept in a secure location. We suggest that PACs own a dedicated filing cabinet or other storage that can be locked and that is only accessible by the current PAC Executive. Correspondence should be destroyed as soon as it is no longer relevant.
2. Electronic storage of communication, correspondence or documents containing student, parent, or guardian contact information should only occur on protected devices that are only accessible by the current PAC Executive. We suggest PACs own a dedicated computer or drive stored in a secure location, is password protected, and is only accessible by the current PAC Executive. Electronic copies of correspondence should be safely deleted as soon as they are no longer relevant.
3. E-mails should be sent from a dedicated PAC email address that is only accessible by the current PAC Executive. E-mail copies of sent and received correspondence should be safely deleted as soon as they are no longer relevant.
4. The use of communication or reminder apps requires separate consent. A signed consent form for each parent/guardian who has agreed to the use of the app, including information on the app, how it is used, and where app data is stored should be kept in a secure file only accessible by the current PAC Executive. If the PAC requests a parent contact this information becomes the PACs responsibility under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) to ensure that the information on the list remains secure. Contact information should be safely deleted from the app and consent forms should be safely destroyed at the end of each school year.
5. The use of social media platforms (Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, etc.) requires the parent/guardian to set up their own social media account. PACs are not responsible for privacy issues related to those platforms, but they are responsible to ensure that any private groups or pages they set up for PAC communication include only users that are part of their PAC community. Only PAC Executive members can add or remove members from groups or pages. At the end of each school year groups or pages should have all members removed.
6. The use of the school photocopier to provide meeting packages and printed resources for parents should be made available to parents for the purpose of the meeting.

Some PACs may find the requirement to maintain privacy difficult. As such we have developed some alternatives to assist PACs with their communication needs.

Notes for better communications

1. Written communication can be done through school newsletters or other school communication. Ask your school principal what their school newsletter schedule is and arrange to have important PAC information included. If the school has a school-specific

calendar, website, or social media platform used to communicate information to parents, ask if you can submit PAC information to it.

2. Communication can also be done through signage. Ask your school if you can have a PAC bulletin board in the school, or if you can put out a sandwich board or other signage in the parking lot to announce important events.
3. Schools can email parents/guardians directly and already have privacy measures in place to ensure this is done safely. Your PAC can ask your school Principal to send out an email on your behalf.
4. PAC Council meetings, committee meetings, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations are an excellent way to add a personal touch and get important word of mouth communication out.

Contacts

DPAC - District Parent Advisory Council for SD57

The SD57 DPAC Executive is available to support parents and PACs, but remember they are volunteers, so response time will vary. [District Parent Advisory Council \(DPAC\)](#)

- Main contact: info@sd57dpac.ca
- Confidential requests can go directly to the DPAC Chair: chair@sd57dpac.ca
- Reach all the executive members at once: exec@sd57dpac.ca
- Alternate email: DPAC@sd57.bc.ca

SD57 School District Board and Staff

[Board of Education](#) with a Liaison for each Family of Schools trustees@sd57.bc.ca

Office of the Superintendent

- Jameel Aziz, Superintendent of Schools: jaziz@sd57.bc.ca Office phone no. 250 561-6800 ext. 321

Office of the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents –

officeofthesuperintendent@sd57.bc.ca

Assistant Superintendents

Pamela Spooner, Assistant Superintendent of Indigenous Education pspooner@sd57.bc.ca – 250-562-4843

- Indigenous Education
- Choice Schools: Nusdeh Yoh Elementary, Polaris Montessori Elementary, Spruceland Community School of the Arts, Ecole Lac des Bois, Ecole Heather Park, Ecole College Heights Elementary

Kap Manhas, Assistant Superintendent kmanhas@sd57.bc.ca – 250 561-6800 ext. 322

- PGSS and Shas Ti – Family of Schools
- All schools in Mackenzie

Lee Karpenko, Assistant Superintendent lkarpenko@sd57.bc.ca – 250 561-6800 ext. 310

- CHSS, DP Todd, DPSS, CLA – Family of Schools
- All schools in McBride and Valemount

School District No 57

[School District No. 57 Website](#)

[Indigenous Education Department](#) Office phone no. 250-562-4843

- Important Dates
- Booking an Elder for indigenous land acknowledgements
- Dakelh language resources

[Inclusive Education Department](#) Office phone no. 250-564-6574

[Central Interior Distance Education](#) Office phone no. at 250-564-6574 ext. 2052

[SD57 Schools](#)

Other Contacts

[Lheidli T'enneh First Nation](#)

- Education Officer– education@lheidli.ca

[McLeod Lake Indian Band](#)

- Education Director educationdirector@milib.ca

Additional Resources and References

SD No. 57 Guidelines for Resolving Problems or Concerns

Refer to the School District Bylaw 4 Appeals process at [Bylaw 4 Appeals Process](#).

Other References

[BC Gaming Grant Information](#)

[BC School Act](#)

[BC Ministry of Education and Childcare](#)

[BC Principal and Vice Principal Association \(BCPVPA\)](#)

[BC School Superintendents Association \(BCSSA\)](#)

[BC Teachers' Federation \(BCTF\)](#)

[School District No. 57 Policy Manual](#)

[SD 57 School Parent Advisory Council – Policy 1223](#)

[Volunteer in Schools – Policy 1240](#)

[BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils \(BCCPAC\)](#)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is the purpose of a Parent Advisory Council (PAC)?
 - 1.1. See Page 4 Responsibilities section, item 2.
2. How does the PAC work?
 - 2.1. Every PAC follows their Constitution and Bylaws and collaborates as a group on how to fulfil their responsibilities within the school. DPAC supports PAC and parent education and resources. Standards for PAC and DPAC Constitution and Bylaws as well as training and guidance on how to work together is laid out by BCCPAC, according to the School Act.
3. How do I get involved with my school PAC?
 - 3.1. Attend the PAC monthly meetings.
 - 3.2. Volunteer at the School – See [link](#) to policy.
 - 3.3. Read the School newsletter to find relevant PAC activities and upcoming meeting information.
 - 3.4. Follow updates on the School website.
 - 3.5. Follow updates on the DPAC website and social media channels.
 - 3.6. Find parents who regularly attend PAC meetings and find out about the work that PAC does.
4. Who can join PAC?
 - 4.1. Any parent or guardian who have children in the school (page 6).
5. What do you do when there is a breakdown between the PAC and the School?
 - 5.1. This is best done by having the PAC president or executive meet with the school Principal.
 - 5.2. Have the Principal reach out to their Assistant Superintendent.
 - 5.3. Contact DPAC for mediation support or clarification on these guidelines.
6. How can a PAC spend Gaming Grants?
 - 6.1. See the following BC Gaming website for procedures [BC Gaming Grant Information](#).
7. Does the Principal or Vice Principal have to attend a PAC meeting?
 - 7.1. It is good practice for the Principal/Vice Principal (and Secondary School Business Manager as needed) to be invited and attend PAC meetings for them to provide updates, reports, etc. They may be invited to attend the first part of the meeting (e.g. the PAC meeting may be one hour, the Principal/Vice Principal may attend the first half) and then be excused for the rest of the meetings.
 - 7.2. Invite a teacher/staff representative to your PAC meetings to provide additional information and context on school activities and initiatives that enhances the updates that the Principal/Vice Principal provides.
8. Who leads/owns the PAC meeting?

- 8.1. PAC and is governed by their Constitution and Bylaws, with possible input by school admin.
9. How can the school help PAC communicate with parents?
 - 9.1. Ensure PAC meetings are communicated in the school newsletters. Assist with updating the “PAC Information” section of the school website with meeting dates, minutes, Constitution and Bylaws, events, and parent resources. Forward specific messaging from PAC through the school email system to parents, when appropriate, including information forwarded from DPAC and BCCPAC.
 - 9.2. The district provides an sd57.bc.ca email account for PACs who need a dedicated inbox and file storage. This is an official way for PACs to be contacted and keeps information in one place.