

Resource Materials

Adopted from:

Alberta Education
School Council Resource Manual (1995)

School District No. 48 (Howe Sound)
SUGGESTED CODE OF ETHICS
for School Planning Councils

A member shall:

Be guided by the mission statement of his or her school district.

Endeavour to be familiar with school policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.

Practise the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth.

Recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.

Encourage a positive atmosphere where individual contributions are encouraged and valued.

Apply democratic principles.

Consider the best interests of all students.

Respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the School Planning Council.

Not disclose confidential information.

Limit discussions at School Planning Council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.

Use the appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise.

Promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community.

Accept accountability for decisions.

Declare any conflict of interest.

Accept no payment for School Planning Council activities.

Parent rights and responsibilities

Rights

Parents have the right to:

- ❖ Be involved in meaningful decisions related to their child's education.
- ❖ Be informed on matters affecting the education of their child, such as the school environment, program content, teaching methods, school policies.
- ❖ Contribute to decisions about the school's environment, programs and practices.
- ❖ Communicate with the School Planning Council, Parent Advisory Council, teachers, principal and the School Board in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- ❖ Hold the teachers, school administration and the education system accountable for the quality of education in the school.
- ❖ Expect that all children will receive the best possible education in a safe and friendly environment.

Responsibilities

Parents have the responsibility to:

- ❖ Support the principal, teachers and support staff.
- ❖ Work for change where needed and to help the school provide a safe and friendly environment for their child's education.
- ❖ Keep informed about and respond to education issues at the school level, board level and provincial level.
- ❖ Participate in an informed and democratic way in school decisions.
- ❖ Act in a socially responsible manner.
- ❖ Accept accountability for their child as a learner and their role in their child's learning.

Building Consensus

What is consensus?

Consensus is finding the highest level of agreement without dividing participants into factions. It is an important tool, but may not be needed for all decisions.

Why build consensus?

- The process involves everyone and incorporates all ideas.
- It generates commitment to action and to each other.
- It helps teams work together in a positive way to develop mutual trust and understanding.
- It helps identify areas of agreement.
- It facilitates discussion.
- It provides an opportunity to explore how each person feels about an issue—important information when designing an eventual action plan.

Consensus process:

- State the problem clearly.
- Brainstorm.
- Discuss each item. Clarify. Don't jump to solutions.
- Categorize, narrow the focus, eliminate items, and modify.
- Select final statements. Use consensus voting.

RULES OF CONSENSUS SEEKING

- ✓ ***NO averaging***
- ✓ ***NO majority rule***
- ✓ ***NO excluding anyone***
- ✓ ***NO GIVING UP***

Consensus Voting:

- How many are all for it-believe in it so much, they could be leaders on the issue?
- How many are all for it-will lend support?
- How many need to talk about the issue further?
- How many are not sure, but trust the opinion of the group?

**THE FIRST PERSON TO SAY NO TO THE PROPOSAL
MUST GIVE AN ALTERNATIVE.**

Deciding which issues belong with the School Planning Council

Not all education issues are appropriately handled at the School Planning Council level. From the range of issues possible, council should decide which they are able to deal with and in what way.

SAMPLE EXERCISE

The following list could be written on file cards for participants to categorize in one of five ways:

1. Not the School Planning Council's responsibility (by legislation)
2. Not the School Planning Council's responsibility (by choice)
3. For information of School Planning Council only
4. For advice/consultation by School Planning Council
5. As part of a collaborative decision-making process (School Planning Council as a partner)

ITEM	CATEGORY 1-5	COMMENTS
1. Achievement test results		
2. Budget and resources		
3. Communication procedures		
4. Confidential issues		
5. Controversial programs (drugs, parenting skills)		
6. Curriculum change		
7. Decisions from BC Ministry of Education and School Board		
8. Educational and societal data and facts		
9. Extracurricular programs		
10. Field trips		
11. Fundraising		
12. Helping students e.g. homework		
13. Student behaviour issues		
14. Locally developed courses		
15. Long-range planning		
16. Maintenance and facilities		
17. Parent-teacher interviews		
18. Political activities		
19. Report cards-format, timing		
20. Resource and material selection		

ITEM	CATEGORY 1-5	COMMENTS
21. School goals		
22. School events- schedule/calendars		
23. School and staff organization		
24. School year-length, timing		
25. School programs and courses		
26. School philosophy- mission and vision		
27. Hiring staff		
28. Staff competence		
29. Student activity e.g. hot lunches		
30. Student handbook		
31. Student placement		
32. Student policy (development on discipline, lates, dress code, attendance)		
33. Supervision issue		
34. Teacher evaluation process and policy		
35. Test schedules		
36. Volunteers		
37. Personnel Issues		

Please note: #'s 27, 28 and 37 belong to Category 1 (not the business of the School Planning Council)

Combining Vision with Action through Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is an effective and systematic way to determine the expectations of the school community and to find ways to meet them. It is a continuous process in which missions and visions are formulated, guiding principles are identified, objectives are written, action plans are developed and progress is evaluated. Strategic planning takes both time and commitment, but results in clear benefits.

- **Effort and resources are effectively focused on desired results.**
- **A framework for decision making is established.**
- **Decisions move consistently toward goals.**
- **Today's decisions can be viewed in light of future consequences.**
- **Teamwork and unity of effort are strengthened.**
- **A framework is provided for initiative, improvement and innovation.**
- **Leadership, thinking, communication and action skills are developed.**
- **Time spent on crisis management is minimized.**

Three factors are key to the success of any plan: the support of the School Planning Council; the support of the school community; and regular reviews and updates. All School Planning Council members should support the strategic planning process, but it is especially important that key figures, like the principal, be seen to fully back the process and its results. If key members of the school council lack this commitment, any plan formulated has little chance of being carried out.

Second, the plan must have credibility within the school community. Individual members of the school community need to be consulted on what the plan should include; should have the opportunity to review each component of the plan as it is developed; and should review and approve the final strategic plan before it is implemented.

Finally, the plan must remain current. The strategic plan should be reviewed quarterly to monitor progress, and during this review, any necessary adjustments to the plan should be made. The plan should be updated annually so it continues to meet the expectations of the school community. This annual update

- **Represents a commitment to strategic planning**
- **Validate priorities**
- **Strengthens the credibility of the process**
- **Narrows the focus allowing concentrated effort on objectives**
- **Enables the school to budget to its plan, not plan to its budget**

Essentially, strategic planning is an information gathering and generating process where the principal and the School Planning Council, or a subcommittee of the School Planning Council, review past, present and future information; envisage the school's future; and develop an overall guiding plan to achieve that future. Strategic planning and evaluating is not an event; it is a way of life in a successful school.

The Strategic Planning Process

1. Environmental Scan

- What do we know about current conditions, existing plans, clients or visions?
- What do we know about future trends?
- What are the perceptions and expectations of our school community?
- What kind of future would we like to see?

2. Information Analysis

- Using our leadership, intuition and judgement, what does the information tell us?
- Do we need more information?

3. Strategic Planning

- What do we want to keep doing?
- What do we want to do differently?

4. Tactical Planning

- When will we get it done?
- Who will do what, when?

5. Implementation

- Doing the work-forming teams, setting timelines and monitoring progress.

6. Renewing the Cycle

- Evaluating projects, revising plans, celebrating success.

Combining Vision and Action

NINE STEP CHECKLIST

- 1. Describe the current situation in detail** —
 - *Complete the Current Situation Worksheet**
 - *Complete the SWOT analysis**
 - *Identify major issues**

- 2. Narrow the issues** —

- 3. Write goals** —

- 4. Set goals in order or priority and do a force field analysis** —

- 5. Select a goal or goals** —

- 6. Design a plan to fulfil the goal** —

- 7. Implement the plan** —

- 8. Evaluate the plan-has the goal been met?** —

- 9. CELEBRATE** —

The Current Situation

<p>What should we be doing MORE of?</p> <hr/>	<p>What should we be doing LESS of?</p> <hr/>
<p>What NEW things could we do?</p> <hr/>	<p>What must we STOP doing?</p> <hr/>

SWOT Analysis

<p>What are our STRENGTHS?</p>	<p>What are our WEAKNESSES?</p>
<p>What OPPORTUNITIES exist?</p>	<p>What THREATS should we be aware of?</p>

Identify the Issues

A. List in rank order the top educational issues in British Columbia.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

B. List in rank order the top issues for your school and School Planning Council.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

C. Does the list of issues and/or the rank order change over the longer term (24-36 months)? If so, show your revised list below.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

D. Compare lists with the other members of the School Planning Council. What common issues have been identified?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

E. Choose one or more of the common issues for discussion.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Narrowing the Issues

CURRENT SITUATION	DESIRED SITUATION
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

Identifying Goals

A process for developing group goals

(Participants are in groups of 4 or 5)

- 1) Individually, on 5 or 6 post-it notes, write phrases that suggest a goal, purpose, direction or priority.
- 2) Individually, one at a time and silently, place the post-it notes on a piece of chart paper. The first person puts his or her notes along the top of the paper to start a column of ideas, The next person reads what is there and adds his or her post-it notes to the columns started, or makes new ones. Continue this activity until everyone's post-it notes are in columns.
- 3) Still individually and silently, read all the post-it notes on the chart and move them as categories suggest themselves. Everyone should be familiar with all of the ideas.
- 4) Discuss the columns and the ideas within them. Move the post-it notes based on agreement of the group.
- 5) For each column, write at least one goal statement.
- 6) Compare all the lists. Make one common list.
- 7) Decide priorities by consensus. Now proceed to the planning stage.

THE GOALS

Try to keep goals simple and, if possible, identify the goal as achievable, within one, two or three years. All goals should be steps toward achieving your ultimate VISION.

GOAL ONE:
GOAL TWO:
GOAL THREE:

FORCED FIELD ANALYSIS

For each goal statement do a force field analysis. This involves brainstorming to identify the forces which can help you reach the goal and those forces which might hinder you. Three types of forces could be considered:

- * those within people
- * those amongst people
- * external forces

GOAL: _____

HELPING FORCES (FOR)	HINDERING FORCES (AGAINST)

Action Plan for _____

20__ to 20__

GOAL # _____

STRATEGIES	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	EVALUATION

Sample Action Plan

GOAL 1:

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	HOW

GOAL 2:

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	WHERE	HOW

Planning and Conducting Effective Meetings

Before the meeting – notify, inform and involve

The effort expended in notifying members of the school community of the meeting will result in a stronger group whose decisions are more valid in the eyes of the community. Saturate the school community with notices, reminders and incentives to attend.

- Advertise in school and community newsletters
- Circulate the year's meeting dates at the beginning of the school year
- Provide incentives to students to get the notice home
- Use a lawn sign
- Telephone people—consider a phone fan-out system
- Use community events services
- Advertise any particularly pertinent or special agenda items
- Inform people of the start and finish time of the meetings
- Offer baby-sitting if appropriate

Planning an agenda

A carefully planned and organized agenda is the foundation of a successful meeting. A good agenda briefly outlines what you intend to discuss and in what order. Items on the agenda should reflect the concerns and interests of your school community. The chair develops the agenda and asks if anyone has items to add at the beginning of the meeting. The chair:

- Tailors the agenda to the time available, ensuring each item is allotted sufficient time for discussion
- Reviews previous minutes and includes items that need revisiting on the agenda
- Includes time for business arising from the minutes
- Limits meetings to a maximum of two hours
- Distributes the agenda to members seven days before the meeting
- Ensures the whole school community is aware of meeting dates and agenda items. (No matter which model of governance is used, input from the school community is essential.)

CONSENT AGENDA

A consent agenda is a good way to get some business done quickly. The chair presents a list of items primarily for information and asks that the consent agenda be approved before moving on to the meeting agenda. Items on the consent agenda may include:

- A list of correspondence and how it was handled
- Updates of projects and committee work not being discussed at the meeting
- Notices and announcements

Anyone wishing to discuss an item on the consent agenda may ask to have it moved to the meeting agenda.

Meeting Evaluation Form

Meeting Evaluation

DATE: _____

Please take the time to complete this survey. This is your opportunity to improve future meetings.

Evaluation Scale

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (very much so)

(Circle one)

1. Was the agenda of this meeting clear to you? 1 2 3 4 5
2. Were you encouraged to contribute as much as you wanted? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Did the atmosphere allow for free discussion? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Was there enough time for discussion? 1 2 3 4 5
5. Are you clear on what, if any, decisions(s) was reached? 1 2 3 4 5
6. Are you clear on the next steps being taken? 1 2 3 4 5
7. Are you clear about who is responsible for taking the next steps? 1 2 3 4 5
8. Do you think the purpose of this meeting was fulfilled? 1 2 3 4 5
9. Do you have suggestions for improving future meetings? (written response)

Enhancing Parent Participation

Parental involvement contributes so much to student success. School Planning Councils need to break down any barriers between the home and school and make the school a warm, receptive place for parents. School Planning Council members should welcome new parents to meetings and inform them of the variety of ways in which they can be involved. Every parent has something to contribute.

When parents feel their input matters, most are eager to participate. Making School Planning Council meetings punctual, productive and efficient will encourage parents to remain involved. The use of committees can help parents contribute in areas that meet their interests and/or expertise.

Offering parents a chance to learn something new, along with a business part of a meeting, helps ensure business items are addressed quickly; that meetings are more interesting; and that a broad group of parents participate. Provide information sessions using guest speakers, discussions or debates, videos or films.

Keep in mind that parents themselves are a great resource for information:

Invite a parent who is a marketing professional to talk to your School Planning Council about ways to tell the community of the school's successes.

Invite a parent who is a counsellor to speak on communication skills.

Invite a parent who is a builder to provide advice on cost-effective ways to build a new playground.

Invite a parent who is a lawyer to help develop the School Planning Council bylaws.

Invite a parent who is a nurse to speak on the nutritional needs of children.

Invite a parent who is a musician to speak on practice techniques that work for students.

A round of applause: showing your appreciation

Every year more parent and community volunteers are contributing their time and expertise to BC schools. School Planning Councils have a responsibility to encourage, nurture and reward this type of involvement—to say thanks.

The heartfelt words “thank you” are always appreciated.

Effective Meeting Strategies

Stimulating discussion

In its advisory role, a School Planning Council should have ample opportunity to develop a full range of ideas surrounding an issue. The chair is responsible for facilitating this process. Listed below are a number of techniques that can be used to assist participants in expressing their views.

Chair initiation

- ❑ The chair invites a wide range of people to speak
- ❑ All who wish to speak are given the opportunity
- ❑ If necessary, time limits can be put on each speaker

Pairing

- ❑ People are randomly paired off to discuss an issue and report back to the group

Table go round

- ❑ The chair invites each person to speak to an issue (if they choose)
- ❑ A time limit is placed on speakers

Absolute quiet

- ❑ Participants have time to think, read or make notes relating to the issue being discussed

Creative problem-solving

Brainstorming A few ground rules help brainstorming effectiveness

- ❑ Ensure everyone is clear on the issue
- ❑ Allow no criticism
- ❑ List every idea
- ❑ Encourage quantity, not quality: the more the better
- ❑ Modify and combine ideas
- ❑ Use visual aids
- ❑ Allow participants to choose priorities

Round table This process is similar to brainstorming, however, the group is subdivided into small groups of four to six people

- ❑ Use flip charts to record all ideas
- ❑ Give each group a time limit
- ❑ Record all ideas and report back to the main group

Brain writing This is similar to the round table, with more individual participation.

- Each member has index cards and writes down one idea on each card
- Cards are exchanged and new ideas or comments are added
- A facilitator records ideas

Pro/con analysis In this process participants focus only on the pros and cons of an issue.

Valuing or Decision Making (the process of setting priorities)

Voting

- After all items have been listed, each member votes on what he or she considers the three or four best ideas.
- Coloured stickers or differently coloured felt markers can be used to rank ideas in order of importance.
- The recorder records or tallies priority items.

Value voting

This method is useful to get feedback when time is limited.

- The chairperson asks people to take a position on the issue (strongly agree through strongly disagree).

Multi voting

This is a variation of brainstorming which allows the group to narrow down the number of ideas presented.

- After brainstorming, the numbering and combining of items is done as necessary.
- Each member selects one quarter of the items they want to discuss.
- Those ideas that have the least interest are eliminated and the remaining ideas are kept for further discussion.

Communication Skills

Collaboration is hard work. Improved communication is an important function of a School Planning Council. Unfortunately, ineffective communication is the most frequently unresolved issue. As communication is a major challenge in all human relationships, it comes as no surprise that well-honed communication skills are essential to an effective School Planning Council.

Conflict is also a natural part of human existence, but it is not always negative. A continually like-minded group can become stagnant and resistant to new ideas. Conflict can encourage people to find creative solutions.

Opening the channels of communication:

First, it's important to remember who needs to be included in the educational conversation. Information must flow between members of the School Planning Council and the community, and between members of the School Planning Council and the Parent Advisory Council and the other major educational stakeholders.

Individual communication skills

1. Stop talking--to others and to yourself--and learn to still the voice within: listening is an equal partner in communication, but it can not be done while you are talking.
2. Carefully examine the other person's viewpoint. See if you can effectively summarize the points. You may find more to agree with than you imagine.
3. Look, act and be interested.
4. Observe non-verbal behaviour such as body language to grasp meanings beyond what is being said.
5. Do not interrupt. Sit still past your tolerance level. Listen between the lines for implicit meanings as well as explicit ones.
6. If you must interrupt, speak only affirmatively. Resist the temptation to jump in with an evaluative, critical or disparaging comment while someone is expressing his or her point of view.
7. To ensure understanding, at key points in the conversation, rephrase what the other person has said.
8. When you speak, speak clearly and only to the issue being discussed. If you have several points to make, jot them down ahead of time to help keep you focused.

*When you are communicating well, but you still do not agree,
You are in conflict (and that can be a good thing).*

Conflict is a natural part of human existence. While conflict can be devastating if left uncontrolled, in a structured environment, where mutual trust and respect prevail, it can be a positive force.

CONFLICT has a good side. It can:

- ✓ **Clarify an issue**
- ✓ **Open new issues**
- ✓ **Increase involvement of members**
- ✓ **Encourage growth**
- ✓ **Create more spontaneous communication**
- ✓ **Strengthen relationships when it is successfully resolved**

But, CONFLICT also has an ugly side. Left uncontrolled, it can:

- ❖ **Divert energy from the task at hand and decrease productivity**
- ❖ **Destroy morale**
- ❖ **Polarize individuals and groups**
- ❖ **Deepen differences**
- ❖ **Obstruct co-operative action**
- ❖ **Produce irresponsible behaviour**
- ❖ **Create suspicion and distrust**

Taming the monster: Resolving Conflict

1. Identify the source of the conflict

Understanding conflict helps tame it. Groups can begin to seek solutions to conflict only after they have clearly identified the source. Conflict usually occurs because of disagreement on:

- Facts**
- Goals**
- Methods**
- Values, beliefs and ethics**

2. Identify contributing problems

In seeking solutions to conflicts in any of these four areas, it is important to be aware of the common stumbling blocks:

COMMUNICATION

Does the discussion involve:

- Misinformation or a lack of information?**
- Ill-defined expectations?**
- Hidden agendas?**
- A lack of candour and an absence of trust?**

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Can the defined decision-making process be more effective?

RESOURCES

Do limited resources such as time or finances prevent seeking a solution to the conflict?

HUMAN FACTORS

Human personality traits such as authoritarianism, rigid viewpoints and low self-esteem can be difficult sources of conflict. They are often impossible to change and can be managed only with diplomacy and tact.

3. Resolve the conflict

Clear, effective decision-making guidelines are important tools in resolving conflict.

Conflict Resolution Process

Step 1 Plan Ahead

- *take time for individual planning and reflection*
- *clarify specific concerns, interests and positions*
- *identify underlying concerns*
- *be aware of personal needs*
- *establish a meeting time and place*

Step 2 Set the Stage

- *set a positive tone*
- *adopt a problem-solving mode*
- *acknowledge the other person*
- *agree to some ground rules*

Step 3 Talk it out

- *define the problem*
- *understand issues from different perspectives*
- *deal with emotions*
- *identify needs and interests*
- *discuss assumptions and values*

Step 4 Create Solutions

- *identify a range of options*
- *determine advantages and disadvantages*
- *choose solutions(s) that are mutually satisfactory*

Step 5 Plan for Follow-Up

- *agree to a future meeting*

Be hard on the problem, easy on the person.

SETTING A POSITIVE CLIMATE

To resolve conflict you need:

- ***A co-operative attitude***
- ***High stakes***
- ***A positive working relationship***
- ***The ability to engage in joint problem-solving***