

SURREY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION STAFF COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

First Edition



surrey **teachers'** association

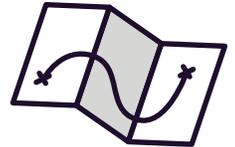
Role of the Staff Committee



Staff committees can impact all decisions made in a school. It is a wonderful vehicle for teachers to have real input into how their school is run! For example, the staff committee may study and make recommendations on:

School regulations, policies and routines

- Dress codes,
- Discipline plans and procedures,
- Assemblies,
- Attendance,
- Parent teacher days,
- Field trips,
- Collection of money etc.



Non-instructional days

- Working with Pro-D committees to suggest and plan content,
- Making summer Pro-D suggestions or limits,



School Curriculum planning and evaluation

- Course offerings,
- Fine arts events involving the community,
- Evaluation/ reporting formats and schedule,
- School calendar, etc.

School timetable and organization

- Class sizes and fairness across the school,
- Gym or other shared space schedules, limitations,



School staffing

- Teaching assignments,
- Utilization of EAs,
- Consideration of upcoming postings within the school and that will be posted externally,
- Organization of split classes or new courses, etc.

Any issue affecting the teaching or learning conditions within the school

- Internal transfer of students.
- Initial placement of students
- Staff – administration communication and relationship
- School climate
- Wider community or neighbourhood issues – to bring to the attention of staff and admin





How Can I Make a Change in Policy at My School?

Process at a Glance

The teacher is there too, to present the idea!

STEP 3

The staff committee discusses the issue and makes a recommendation to the whole staff and brings motions forward to the staff meeting

STEP 4

The whole staff considers and votes on the recommendations

STEP 5

Administrator accepts and acts on the recommendation or responds to the staff committee in writing if unwilling to comply with the staff's recommendation

STEP 1

The staff or an individual teacher identifies an issue

STEP 2

The item is placed on the staff committee agenda

If the issue or non-action is perceived to be in violation of the collective agreement, the Staff Committee may initiate the grievance procedure as per the relevant article in the CA.

Surrey Collective Agreement Language

Re: Staff Committees

ARTICLE A.34 SCHOOL STAFF COMMITTEES

A.34.1 Establishing Staff Committee

Each school staff shall have the right to form a staff committee structure which promotes and facilitates a democratic, collegial process in school-based decision making.

A.34.2 Size and Make-up

- a) Staff committees may consist of the total staff or a representative committee elected by the staff as a whole.
- b) The staff committee shall include one (1) representative of the school administration.

A.34.3 Operational Procedure

- a) The size, composition, tenure and operational procedures of the staff committee shall be determined by a majority vote of the school staff by September 30th of each school year.
- b) Copies of the procedures for each school shall be filed with the Surrey Teachers' Association and the Board.
- c) Amendments shall be submitted to the Surrey Teachers' Association and the Board when they come in to effect.

A.34.4 Areas of Responsibility

A staff committee's role may include the following:

- a) The development and maintenance of effective communication and consultative processes throughout the school;
- b) The review of school policies and procedures and the development of recommendations for improvement;
- c) Receiving and making recommendations on matters of concern presented by staff;
- d) Ensuring the development and maintenance of a professional development committee for the school;
- e) Ensuring the establishment and maintenance of a health and safety committee for the school.

A.34.5 Implementation

- a) The Principal shall not unreasonably refuse to implement the recommendations of the staff committee or the majority decisions of a staff meeting.
- b) In a case where a Principal rejects a recommendation of a staff committee or a majority decision of a staff meeting, the Principal will submit the reasons for rejection, in writing, to the staff committee.

A.34.6 Individual Rights

In the event that a Surrey Teachers' Association member or a Principal feels that a staff meeting decision is contrary to this collective agreement, the School Act and/or Regulations, then advice will be sought from the Surrey Teachers' Association or the Human Resources Department, as applicable.

ARTICLE E.27 SYSTEM INITIATED TRANSFERS

*E.27.1 Forced Transfer

- *c) The staff committee of the affected school and the Surrey Teachers' Association will be given the names of all forced transfers as soon as they are identified.

FAQs

for Staff Committees



WHAT ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP THINGS RUN?

Think of it as a monthly process. Here's a typical month for the chair of a staff committee:

- Plan to have your staff committee meeting a week or so before the Staff meeting. You could set up a year-long schedule for regular meetings if that works for your school. Special meetings on urgent issues can also take place.
- Mid-month, send an email to all staff to ask for agenda items. When items come in, create the agenda, and circulate the proposed agenda a few days before the planned meeting. This may generate more items, as people are reminded of the upcoming meeting! If appropriate, add the new items and circulate the adjusted agenda. It is important that all staff know what will be discussed, as items may pertain to them and they may want to come and speak on these issues.
- It is important to notify people who should be at the meeting if an agenda item will affect them personally. For example, if an agenda item is about something happening at the library, make sure the librarian is informed about it so they can attend! Hold the meeting. Have someone appointed to take minutes, and to forward them to the chair as soon as possible after the meeting for distribution to the whole staff.
- Email the minutes to the whole staff, and also prepare to present the motions to the Staff meeting.
- Present any motions passed (or defeated!) at your staff committee meeting to the general staff meeting for their consideration and vote. The staff committee chair should facilitate the discussion on these items at the staff meeting.

WHO SHOULD BE ON THE STAFF COMMITTEE?

- Many schools already have a constitution established, and you can ask your principal for a copy of it. The constitution might stipulate that different departments, grades, or school roles should be represented. (If it seems like it should be changed, constitutions can also be amended by your staff to better suit your school's make up going forward!)
- If your school doesn't have a staff committee constitution, see a couple of example ones in this package.
- Make sure a staff rep is one of the members.
- Administrators should have one vote, not a vote for each one of them.
- Since having a staff committee is our right established through negotiations between the Employer and the STA, CUPE workers (Secretarial staff, EAs, custodial staff, Youth care workers etc.) should not be official members with a vote on the committee, but it can be very helpful to have them present at meetings, especially if they have an issue to bring forward, or an issue you are discussing involves their work or expertise.

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO CHAIR A MEETING! HOW DO I DO IT?

Different schools do things different ways, and that is OK, but some formality does tend to speed up meetings, once people get the hang of it. See our tips sheet on the next page for some basic rules of order to help you!

Most basically, the chair will keep a speaker's list during the meeting, which means maintain a list during the meeting of who has indicated they want to speak (by raising their hand) and letting people speak in turn. This helps different voices be heard so all sides of an issue can be discussed. It also prevents someone from dominating or interrupting the discussion.

Some staff committees have a discussion about an issue first, and then vote on a motion that captures the idea, and others have motions proposed first, followed by debate, discussion and then voting. The important thing is that if you have arrived at a decision, make sure it is articulated and recorded and voted upon by the members of the committee, so everyone is clear on what the committee is taking forward to the whole staff meeting.

The chair should **not** also be trying to take minutes. They may want to write down the wording of motions, but it is too difficult to do both chairing and minutes- taking at the same time! Ask for a member of the committee to be the regular recording secretary.

Some of the Basic Rules of Order (primer for committees)

Motion: A main motion brings business before a meeting. A meeting can consider only one subject at a time, so a main motion can be made only when no other motion is pending. The meeting cannot consider any other business until the motion has been disposed of (or some other motion of higher precedence has been proposed, seconded, and accepted by the chair.)

Amendment: A motion to change, to add words to, or to omit words from, an original motion—usually to clarify or improve the wording of the original motion. (There is a long tradition of not allowing amendments that are contrary to the intent of the motion.)

Amendment to the amendment: A motion to change, to add words to, or to omit words from, the first amendment. (There cannot be an amendment to the amendment to the amendment.)

Challenge the Chair: Any ruling of the chair can be challenged, but such appeals must be made immediately after the ruling. If debate has progressed, a challenge is not in order.

Refer: If a motion needs to be discussed more informally or at greater length than is possible in a regular meeting, Robert's Rules allows you to refer the motion (usually to a specific committee). Both sides of the issue must have been heard for this motion to be in order.

Table: A motion to set aside consideration of the main motion; it has the effect of delaying or preventing action from being taken on the main motion. Rather than passing or defeating a motion, a meeting may choose to “bury” it by tabling. A motion to table is not debatable, so if someone moves to table a motion, the vote to do so (or not) takes place immediately.

Postpone: A motion to postpone to a certain time (or postpone indefinitely) allows for limited debate which must not go into the merits of the main question any more than is necessary to enable the meeting to determine the propriety of the postponement. It may only be amended as to the time of postponement.

I move that we:

Adopt... (the agenda/ or the minutes from meeting dated _____)

Amend... (agenda/minutes/motion)

Recommend... (something --to another body – admin, dept, STA reps etc.)

Put the question... (i.e. vote now /stop debating)

Table the motion... (it disappears; no record of it)

Refer the motion... (to the next meeting)

NOTE: Remember to record in the minutes who the mover/seconded was, and if it “carried” or was “defeated.”

Sample Staff Committee Minutes

Date _____ Time start _____ Chair _____ Recording Secretary _____

Members in attendance:

Member(s) Regrets:

Agenda items:

-
-
-
-

Item #1: notes:

Motion:

Moved by: _____ Seconded by: _____

Carried/ defeated

Item #2: notes:

Motion:

Moved by: _____ Seconded by: _____

Carried/defeated

Item #3: notes:

Motion:

Moved by: _____ Seconded by: _____

Carried/defeated

Sample Staff Committee Operational Procedures (Constitution) [Name of School]

Chair Person: [Name] [part of staff representing—can't be admin]
Vice Chair Person/Secretary: [Name] [part of staff representing]
[Name] [part of staff representing]

[Name] [part of staff representing]
[Name] [administrator]
[Name] [STA rep]

**Highlighted Sections are lifted from the Surrey Collective Agreement*

ARTICLE A.34 ESTABLISHING STAFF COMMITTEE

1. Article A.34.1: Each school staff shall have the right to form a staff committee structure, which promotes and facilitates a democratic, collegial process in school-based decision-making.

The Staff Committee will operate within the guidelines of the School Act, School Board Policies and the STA/Surrey School Board Collective Agreement (Article 34.6)

2. Article A.34.2: Size and Makeup:

The staff committee will consist of six (6) members, consisting of one Administrator and five (5) members elected by the staff as follows:

- i. One representative from Primary;
- ii. One representative from Intermediate;
- iii. One representative from non-enrolling staff;
- iv. One S.T.A.R.A. representative; and
- v. One member-at-large from any portion of the school staff

3. Article 34.3.a: Voting:

- a) The size, composition, tenure and operational procedures of the staff committee shall be determined by a majority vote of the school staff by September 30th of each school year.
- b) Staff committee shall vote the Chair and secretary into office. The Chair shall not be an administrator.
- c) Meetings are open to all teaching staff and all may participate in the business of the day, but only the committee members present will be able to vote on motions. Motions are voted on and carried by a simple majority.
- d) Staff committee motions/recommendations will be presented to the teaching staff as a whole at staff meeting to be discussed and voted on by the whole teaching staff.

4. Article A.34.3 Operational Procedures

- a) Copies of the procedures of each school shall be filed with the Surrey Teachers' Association (the "STA") and the Board;
- b) The [Name of School] Staff Committee will foster the values, attitudes, and skills for an enlightened, reasonable and democratic process in decision-making;
- c) Staff committee at [Name of School] will operate in a democratic way with each individual or group within the committee contributing to the meeting;
- d) Staff committee members are a team of professional working for the common good of the school;

- e) A staff committee agenda form will be kept in a folder in the chairperson's mailbox for teaching staff to record motions. Additions can be made up to two days prior to the staff committee meeting.
- f) Each member of the staff committee will have one vote on any recommendations.
- g) Members who raise items or tender motions for staff committee must be in attendance to present the item/motion
- h) The chairperson will ensure staff committee minutes are distributed to the teaching staff via email

3. Article A.34.4 Areas of Responsibility

- a) The role of staff committee includes the following:
- b) Development and maintenance of communication and consultative processes throughout the school;
- c) Review school policies and procedures and the development of recommendations for improvement;
- d) Receiving and making recommendations on matters of concern presented by staff;
- e) Ensuring the development and maintenance of a professional development committee for the school;
- f) Ensuring the establishment and maintenance of a health and safety committee for the school.

4. Article A.34.5 Implementation

- a) The principal shall not unreasonably refuse to implement the recommendation of the staff committee or the majority decisions of a staff meeting;
- b) In a case where a principal rejects a recommendation of a staff committee or a majority decision of a staff meeting, the principal will submit the reasons for rejection, in writing, to the staff committee.

5. Article A.34.6 Individual Rights

In the event that a Surrey Teachers' Association member or a Principal feels that a staff meeting decision is contrary to the Collective Agreement, the School Act and/or School Act Regulations, then advice will be sought from the Surrey Teachers' Association and/or the Human Resource Department, as applicable.

6. General Procedures:

- a) Meeting will be held once a month, in the week preceding the monthly staff meeting;
- b) The Simplified Robert's Rules of Order when necessary will govern meetings;
- c) The agenda will be set such that no meeting will go longer than 30 minutes;
- d) If the agenda necessitates more time than the committee members will vote on an extension;
- e) A quorum is defined as the Chair, 1 administrator and 2 other staff committee members
- f) The Chair, administrator and one other staff committee members can set an unscheduled or emergency meeting. All reasonable efforts will be made to schedule the emergency meeting for a time and place such that all members can attend.
- g) "Old Unfinished Business" will be an automatic agenda item.

Sample Secondary School Staff Committee Constitution/Procedures

Statement of Purpose:

The purpose of the Staff Committee structure is to promote and facilitate a democratic, collegial process in school-based decision making.

I. Composition

Staff Committee consists of eleven voting members:

9 teachers (elected by staff each September; one will be a STARA rep.)

1 administrator

Quorum:

A majority of the members (6), with one being the chair (or chair-appointed designate), must be in attendance before a Staff Committee meeting can commence.

II. Procedures

There should be at least one meeting each month.

Minutes of the previous meeting and the agenda of the upcoming meeting will be distributed by the Chair at least two school days prior to each meeting.

A staff member with a concern or issue will submit this item to the Staff Committee Chair to be added to the agenda.

In order for an item to be considered, this individual—or a representative—must be present at the Staff Committee meeting.

Any staff member may attend a meeting and speak to questions on the floor, but voting is restricted to elected members.

The Chair may call an emergency meeting if an issue must be dealt with in a timely manner.

The Chair has the discretion to determine if it is an emergency issue. Should an emergency issue arise after the agenda for an upcoming meeting has been distributed, the Chair will make every effort to communicate this item to staff. If possible, the item should be referred to the next scheduled meeting.

III. Responsibilities

To represent the staff at large

To receive and make recommendations

To advise and assist the administration in the solution of specific problems

To develop and maintain effective communication and consultation throughout the school

To review school policies and procedures and develop recommendations for improvement (an example would be to review Pro. D. Committee, Safety Committee).

IV. Decision-making

Significant Staff Committee motions/recommendations/decisions will be presented to the staff as a whole at staff meetings to be discussed and voted on by the whole staff.

The principal shall not unreasonably refuse to implement the recommendations (decisions) of a Staff Committee or the majority vote of the staff.

In the case where a Principal rejects a recommendation (decision) of the Staff Committee or a majority vote of the staff, the Principal will submit in writing the reasons for rejection to the Staff Committee.

V. Duties of Chair and Secretary

The Staff Committee Chair calls all meetings and accepts motions in accordance with the BCTF Simplified Rules of Order (1984). She/he is also responsible for reporting committee activities to the staff.

Dead but not buried

Unlearning the lessons of Bill 28

By Kip Wood, Nanaimo, Member-at-Large, BCTF Executive Committee

On January 26, 2002, Minister of Education Christy Clark was “delighted” to introduce Bill 28 to cut class size and composition and non-enrolling positions from our collective agreements. Astonishingly, on November 15, 2017, Premier Clark found herself “excited” about the possibility of making sure “classes are the right size for kids.” Let’s not forget that it was only when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the BCTF’s favour that Clark got “excited” about class sizes.

Bill 28 may be dead but it’s not yet buried. Unless those of us working in the public education system “unlearn” what was normalized for the past 15 school years, we risk seeing it rise again.

We learned after 2002	The impact: 2002–2016	We need to unlearn	Opportunities 2017 onward
To navigate a system with a scarcity of resources. How vulnerable teachers were to “budget strategies” of school boards.	Struggles for resources pitted people and programs against each other at budget time.	Discouragement, divisiveness, and competition. Feeling powerless.	To be caretakers of democratic structures at school, local, and provincial levels.
Staff committees, stripped from the contract, had little power or influence. To defer to management.	Staff committees without “teeth” became normalized. Teachers became frustrated with the reduction in their professional autonomy.	Deferring to management on significant workplace decisions. Dysfunctional ways teachers interact with employers.	To assert our professional autonomy over teaching and learning through democratic, effective staff committees and teacher-led professional development.
To accept programs like Response to Intervention (RTI) that filled the void left by the 24% reduction in special education teachers.	RTI increased class sizes, and worsened conditions. It was nothing more than a political attempt to legitimize defunding of special education.	Acceptance of corporate-sponsored special education initiatives such as RTI.	Use school-based team structures to ensure students with special needs have access to timely and effective support.
What it is like to work under a government that does not support teachers.	Nearly half the teachers today were not teaching before 2002—they’ve missed experiencing how it was to be true partners in the employment relationship.	Acceptance of conditions that stop teachers from having real influence over working conditions.	All generations of teachers can move forward together to build a better system.
Persistent teachers practising solidarity can win.	Advocacy works!		Advocate for an improved collective agreement in 2019!

Dismantling the legacy of Bill 28 is now up to us. We must be vigilant. Rights embedded in collective agreements only exist if those rights are asserted. Teachers must push management to honour negotiated terms of our agreements. We can relearn

ways to reach collective solutions and rebuild a system where all participants are valued and respected members of the school community. Only then can our public education system become the equitable, inclusive, and democratic institution it should be. ■

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