



Staff Committee Handbook

SECOND EDITION

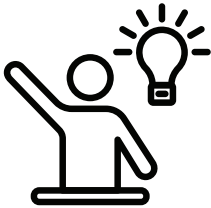
Role of the Staff Committee

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:



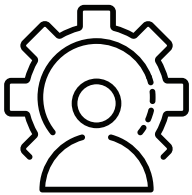
SCHOOL REGULATIONS, POLICIES AND ROUTINES

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



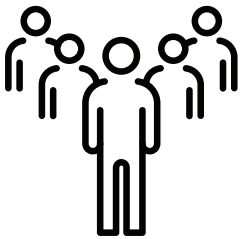
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS

- 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.

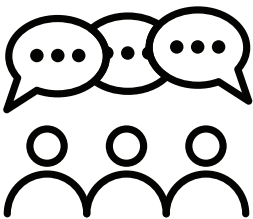


SCHOOL TIMETABLE AND ORGANIZATION

- 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.
- Forced Transfers
- Planning for next school year



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



PROCESS AT A GLANCE

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 4

The whole staff considers and votes on the recommendations.

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 2

The item is placed on the staff committee agenda.

STEP 1

An individual teacher or even the whole staff identifies an issue

The teacher is there too, to present the idea!

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 COMMITTEE

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.



WHAT IF THERE IS NO STAFF COMMITTEE AT MY SCHOOL, OR IT IS NOT FUNCTIONING WELL?

- Know that each staff has the right to establish a staff committee, even if the principal doesn't seem to want it. (See the contract language on facing page)
- Ask the principal or a past staff committee chair for a copy of the constitution from any past staff committee that existed at the school. If they don't have it, or if there has never been one, that is OK, you can create a new one. (see sample constitutions at the back of this booklet)
- Request that the principal place "establishing staff committee" on the next staff meeting agenda. This should be done in September, but if it hasn't happened, make it happen ASAP.
- Speak to several colleagues about putting their names forward to be staff committee members. It is better to do this in advance so people don't feel uncomfortable being "volunteered" at the meeting. If there is a constitutional requirement at your school to have specific roles, such as one person from primary, one from intermediate, one non-enrolling, etc., keep that in mind while recruiting.
- Elect your staff committee at the meeting, then start having monthly meetings. We recommend notifying the whole staff of the dates of the meetings as far in advance as possible, perhaps posting them as a list in your mail room or other central area. Try to be as transparent as possible so everyone knows meetings are taking place.

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.

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.

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 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 Basic Rules of Order 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:

Other staff members in attendance:

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

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

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)

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 50% plus one of the 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.



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School staff committees: **Have your say in running your school**

By George Serra, BCTF staff

During my time as a full-time release officer in Maple Ridge, I came to realize that there was one clause in our collective agreement that teachers rarely or fully used. Can you guess which article that was? School staff committees!

AS LOCAL PRESIDENT, I received countless phone calls from frustrated teachers asking me if a principal could make school-wide decisions that affected staff significantly, without consulting staff. It came as no surprise that the schools where this occurred most often did not have an effective school staff committee in place. Most of your collective agreements will have language that outlines both the make-up of a school staff committee and the process to follow. Even when some collective agreements list the items that a school staff committee can discuss or recommend, language like the sentence below states that school staff committees can also:

Study and make recommendations on any other matters of concern to the teaching staff members.

There is no room for management to say that a topic of concern cannot be discussed at a staff committee meeting. School staff committees are vital for teachers to have

input in their school community and to foster a democratic decision-making culture.

It is true that most staff committee clauses in collective agreements do allow for an administrator to “veto” a successful staff vote on a recommendation, but not without a process that usually includes written notification to all teachers with the reasons why. Furthermore, some collective agreements include a process where the district superintendent is required to investigate a staff committee recommendation that is not supported by the principal.

Most senior managers in school districts will agree that collaborative decision-making is paramount for a well-functioning school community. You do not have to look far to find those schools that have collaborative leadership in action—they are usually found in schools where principals not only support a strong staff committee, but work with the committee proactively to make important school-wide decisions. In schools where staff

committees don't exist, you will often find an administrator that struggles with sharing the leadership role and ultimately rules in a single-handed manner.

I have seen teachers use staff committees effectively by recommending:

- reporting timelines
- Christmas concert and winter break scheduling
- planning of school-wide events, e.g., track days, fun days, spirit events
- expectations for student behaviour and the role of administration regarding serious student behaviour issues.

Check your collective agreement and review the language regarding school staff committees. If your staff is unsure of how to organize an effective staff committee, call your Local President for guidance. In addition, the BCTF provides teachers with a workshop called Effective School Staff Committees. You can book this workshop for you and your colleagues at no cost.

For booking information and to learn more about the workshop visit bctf.ca/PD/WorkshopDetail.aspx?id=38707. ■

