

SOOKE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION STAFF COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

Second Edition



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Role of the Staff Committee

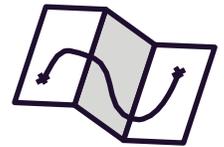


Staff committees can impact all decisions made in a school. It is a wonderful vehicle for teachers to have real input into how their school is run! For example, the staff committee may study and make recommendations on:



School regulations, policies and routines

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

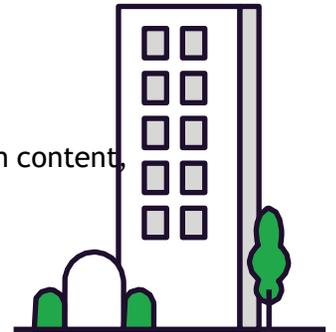


Non-instructional days

- Working with the STA Pro-D committee to suggest and plan content,

School Curriculum planning and evaluation

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



School timetable and organization

- Equitable distribution of workload 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



Sooke Collective Agreement Language Re: Staff Committees

THE POWER OF STAFF COMMITTEES

Do not underestimate the power of Staff Committee recommendation letters. They represent the collective voice of the STA Members of that site.

ARTICLE A.25 SCHOOL STAFF COMMITTEES

A.25.1 Establishing Staff Committee

If the majority of the teaching staff in the school so decide, there shall be established a recognized staff committee in that school.

A.25.2 Size and Make-up

The size and membership of such a staff committee shall be determined by the teaching staff and may include a Principal or Vice Principal. In smaller schools, the staff may decide to act as a committee of the whole.

A.25.3 Areas of Responsibility

Subject to change by a majority vote of the school staff, the staff committee may consider any issue affecting the teaching and learning conditions within the school and make recommendations for improvement in the total teaching and learning situation.

Caveat: There are certain issues that should never be discussed at a Staff Committee Meeting: personnel issues; issues between staff members; anything that might lead to a code of ethics violation.

A.25.4 Implementation

- a) The school administration shall consider written recommendations put forward by the staff committee.
- b) Should the school administration after consideration not act on a recommendation of the staff committee, written reasons shall be provided to the staff committee, with a copy to the Superintendent of Schools.
- c) Decisions made by a majority vote of the school staff and accepted by the Administrator shall be binding on all members of the staff.
- d) The functioning of a staff committee shall not contravene the authority and responsibility of the administration pursuant to the *School Act*.

FAQS



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 so they can attend!
- ★ Be mindful of discussions where members may pass motions that may impact how other STA members do their jobs. Seek advice from the STA Office before convening meetings of this nature.
- ★ 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 STA staff.
- ★ A helpful practice is to *move into committee* at the beginning of the meeting and to explain this means discussions can be repeated among STA members only.
- ★ Email the minutes to the whole STA staff.

WHO SHOULD BE ON THE STAFF COMMITTEE?

- ★ Many schools already have a constitution established. 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 an STA staff rep is one of the members.
- ★ Administrators can be invited to attend from time to time, as needed, but do not have a vote.
- ★ 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) and administrators etc. should not be official members with a vote on the committee, but it can be helpful to invite them to present at meetings, especially if 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!

At minimum, the chair will keep a speaker's list during the meeting, which means maintaining a list 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 on behalf of the whole STA Staff. It is a wise practice to share a draft of the letter with at least the staff committee before sending the final version to management.

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

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.) A motion needs a seconder to be discussed.

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.)

Move in committee/in camera: When the topic of discussion is sensitive, a mover, with a seconder, can move to go in camera (the issue cannot be discussed outside the meeting) or in committee (the issue and decisions can be relayed to other STA members not present for the meeting). Notes on the discussion are not taken. When the discussion has concluded, it takes only a mover (and vote) to rise from committee/camera. Any motions passed while in camera/committee will need to be moved and carried again to be recorded in the meeting minutes and acted upon.

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/seconder was, and if it “carried” or was “defeated.”

Your Staff Committee in ACTION:

- ↓ A member raises an issue
- ↓ Determine if it's a Staff Committee matter
- ↓ If yes, call a staff committee meeting
- ↓ Discuss the issue, vote on a motion (for expediency, it can be helpful to come to the meeting with a motion already drafted; it can be edited during the meeting as needed)
- ↓ Write a Staff Committee letter to the principal, outlining the motion
- ↓ Have the draft proof-read by the STA
- ↓ Make any corrections and send the letter to the principal, Superintendent and STA President
- ↓ Follow up, if no response within a reasonable time frame
- ↓ Celebrate your success!

Tips for writing effective motions:

- ↓ Consider what you want to achieve
- ↓ Be clear and specific: thoughtful and well-worded motions work best
- ↓ Be concise
- ↓ Limit it to one idea or concept per motion
- ↓ It should be able to stand alone
- ↓ If a response or action is required, include it in the motion
- ↓ *Motions must not contravene the CA nor the School Act*

Sample motion:

Move that the Anywhere Elementary School Staff Committee recommend that classroom assignments remain the same, unless mutually agreed upon by STA members."

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

Staff Committee Operational Procedures

SAMPLE

(Constitution) [Name of School]

Chair Person: [Name] [part of staff representing]

Vice Chair Person/Secretary: [Name] [part of staff representing]

Staff Rep: [Name] [part of staff representing]

ARTICLE A.25 ESTABLISHING STAFF COMMITTEE

If the majority of the teaching staff in the school so decide, there shall be established a recognized staff committee in that school.

The Staff Committee will operate within the guidelines of the *School Act*, “School Board Policies” and the *STA Collective Agreement*

Size and Makeup:

The Staff Committee shall be a Committee of the Whole (all teachers who feel they want or need to be on this committee can be).

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.
- c) All teaching staff members will have a vote.

Operational Procedures:

- a) Copies of the procedures of each school shall be filed with the Sooke Teachers’ Association (the “STA”);
- 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

Areas of Responsibility:

The role of staff committee includes the following:

- a) Development and maintenance of communication and consultative processes throughout the school;
- b) Review school policies and procedures and the development of recommendations for improvement;
- c) Receiving and making recommendations on matters of concern presented by staff;
- d) Drafting letters to the appropriate audience to recommend changes.

Implementation:

- a) Letters of recommendations should be written to the principal and be carbon copied to the STA President and Superintendent of Schools. Seeking advice from the STA is recommended before sending the letter. Letters of recommendations could be written to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools, Ministry of Education, and others. In these cases, the STA must be consulted prior to sending those letters.
- b) The principal shall not unreasonably refuse to implement the recommendation of the staff committee or the majority decisions of a staff meeting;
- c) 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 and copied to the Superintendent of Schools. Rejection letters should be forwarded to the STA President.

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 and 2 other staff committee members;
- f) The Chair 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.

Secondary School Staff Committee Constitution/Procedures

SAMPLE

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 nine voting members:
 - 9 teachers (elected by staff each September; one will be a STA rep.)
- ★ Quorum:
 - A majority of the members (5), 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

- ★ 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 and to the Superintendent of Schools. Rejections should be forwarded to the STA President.

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.

STAFF COMMITTEE LETTER TEMPLATE

Date

Dear Principal _____,

SPECIFIC DETAILS:

★ Give information to fully explain the area of concern.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

★ State the specific action you wish the Administration to take and a suggested time-line in which to receive a response.

This email is cc'd to the superintendent as per the collective agreement.

SIGNATURE:

On behalf of the School Staff Committee

cc: STA President: lp62@bctf.ca
SD62 Superintendent: sstinson@sd62.bc.ca

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear _____,

It has come to the attention of the staff committee that you are requesting that certain members of the staff change classrooms for the upcoming school year. The reasons you have given are that the VP wishes the primary classes to be together and that they require a larger room for when they are teaching classes.

As to management's wish to have all of the primary classes together in one area of the school, this did not seem to be a concern of yours this year. There are primary classes in both pods of the school, as there have been for the majority of the years that the school has been open. Of the teachers whom you are expecting to move, one has been teaching primary grades in her room since her arrival here five years ago, the other for six years. Both have their classrooms set up in a manner in which they are comfortable. Both of these teachers have an incredible amount of materials which they use in their teaching, which would require a huge amount of personal time to pack, move, and unpack.

As to your second point on needing the 'larger' room for teaching the VP's classes, as they will have more students than the primary classes, for the entire time this building has been in use, at least one of what are deemed the 'smaller' classrooms have held an upper intermediate classroom, more often than not with 28-30 students in it. This has not had any detrimental effect on the learning of the students. As to needing a space to teach those classes, we are currently configured in such a manner that there will be three empty classrooms next year, one of which people feel is a 'larger' room.

Due to the reasons above, the Staff Committee recommends that room assignments for the upcoming school year, 20XX-20XX, remain as they are, unless requested by, and mutually agreed upon, by the S.T.A. members directly involved in any changes.

We look forward to your reply by Friday, May 8, 20XX.

This email is cc'd to the superintendent as per the collective agreement.

Respectfully,

On behalf of Anywhere Elementary Staff Committee

cc: STA President: LP62@bctf.ca
Sooke Superintendent: sstinson@sd62.bc.ca

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 practicing solidarity can win.	Advocacy works!		Advocate for an improved collective agreement in 2022!

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.

