
PAC + Treasury 101

— Vancouver DPAC —
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PAC 101

Rob Peregoodoff, DPAC chair
Nathan Wilkes 2016/2017 vice-chair

What is a PAC?

A PAC (Parent Advisory Council), through the BC School Act, is the official collective voice of the parents and guardians of a particular school's student community. The PAC will often:

- Provide input to the school through a direct channel to administration
- Learn about (and participate in) school-based activities.
- Advocate for all students of the school community.

PACs are not the forum to discuss student or staff issues.

What is DPAC?

DPAC represents the collective parent voice of all schools PACs within a particular district. In Vancouver School District #39, all school PACs are members of Vancouver DPAC automatically.

See <http://vancouverdpac.org>.

DPAC has a direct channel (hopefully...) to both the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent's office

DPACs are not the forum to discuss student or staff issues.

What is BCCPAC?

BCCPAC represents all DPACs and PACs across British Columbia, representing parents and guardians of students attending provincial public schools.

To attend and vote at the BCCPAC AGM, your PAC must be a member and pay the membership fee (\$75 in 2017).

BCCPAC has a channel to the Ministry of Education

See <http://bccpac.bc.ca>

PAC Bylaws

Have you read your PAC's bylaws? Do you have a copy? Does anyone at your school know where your bylaws are?

If required, ensure you track down your PAC's bylaws, and if necessary write a set of bylaws (Vancouver DPAC will help). This is essential for conflict resolution, any audit activities, or even changing banking or other PAC accounts. Send a copy to Vancouver DPAC.

PAC executive officers

PACs often utilize the following officer roles:

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

The roles may be shared, like joint Co-Chairs, if the bylaws support it. The bylaws stipulate the roles and associated terms.

PAC DPAC representative

Every PAC should also select a **DPAC representative**, who represents the PAC community at Vancouver DPAC, including at DPAC elections and for policy decisions at DPAC meetings.

PAC elections

The PAC bylaws determine the rules regarding officer elections, including timing (some PACs elect in the spring, some elect in the fall). However, it is best practice to announce the election date, often labelled an AGM, as much in advance as possible, providing ample notice and enabling broad parent or guardian participation.

All election results should be published in approved minutes and posted online.

PAC succession planning

PACs are run by parent or guardian volunteers. Succession planning is essential: it is important to pass along customs and “tribal knowledge” about the school community for future parents.

If there is recurring PAC event, like a spring fair or “hot dog days”, create a written manual describing how the event is organized. Some PACs even establish “Past Chair” or “Past Treasurer” positions to ensure overlap with new, incoming officers.

Always leave your school PAC better than when you arrived.

PAC meetings: best practices (1)

- Publish an agenda, with timings or a **set end time**, ideally in advance.
- Ensure all parents have a voice (this is the chair's greatest responsibility).
- Some discussions may need to be taken offline, with a subset of participants.
- Be sure to thank parents and staff for attendance.
- Arrange for child care, if appropriate.

PAC meetings: best practices (2)

PAC bylaws may dictate a formal meeting format and agenda; but if not, the following monthly meeting agenda topics are recommended:

- I. Welcome to parents, acknowledgment, introductions.
- II. Approve the meeting agenda, after review + feedback.
- III. Approve last meeting's minutes, after review + corrections.
- IV. Recurring reports (Chair, Principal, Teacher, Treasurer, and so on).
- V. New business or special presentations.

PAC meetings: best practices (3)

Also, take care with important decisions (*ergo* follow bylaws scrupulously):

- Approve (by vote) and minute any budget or financial change or decision.
- Ensure officer elections (often a case of recruitment and attrition) are handled with respect, following the bylaws carefully.
- Approve (by vote) and minute the addition or removal of signing officers for the banking or related accounts diligently and promptly.

Transparency and permanency of record are important principles.

The PAC online

- Register for a domain and maintain a website for agendas, minutes, and important information, such as the PAC's bylaws.
- Create a permanent, inheritable PAC email address (for continuity), either using Gmail or the registered domain. Also consider separate email account for the Chair, Treasurer, or DPAC representative, if appropriate.
- Optionally, create Twitter or Facebook accounts (this varies by school community and parent volunteers).

A question for all PACs to ask: how do new parents learn about the PAC?

Some recommended online vendors (2017)

- Domain registrar: **Namecheap**
- Website host: **Squarespace**
- Email: **Google** or **Namecheap**
- Mailing list: **MailChimp**
- Surveys: **SurveyMonkey**
- Storage: **Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox, or Box**
- Messaging: **Slack**

Use primary PAC email as “owner” of all cloud services, never a personal email address. Do not rely on technically-minded parents: use services that all future parents can use easily.

If nothing else resonates, remember this:

1. **No personal email addresses.** Make sure your PAC uses a permanent PAC email address, perhaps “yourpacname@gmail.com” or “chair@yourdomainname.com”.
2. Ensure your **PAC bylaws** are posted online and easily accessible. Share a copy with Vancouver DPAC.

Treasury 101

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Gaming Grants

British Columbia PACs are eligible to apply for Gaming Grants from the BC government. (In 2016, the award was \$20 per student based on registration on September 30.) Some key points:

- Must apply every school year.
- Must submit statement of account.
- Funds typically disbursed in October, and funds must always remain in the full control of the PAC.
- Must ensure Gaming Grant funds are used for extra-curricular benefits. This is important to get right; see next slide.

Gaming Grants: what is eligible? (2016)

Eligible examples

- Uniforms for after-school sports.
- Sports or playground equipment.
- School clubs or societies.
- Grad activities.
- Special events for students (extra-curricular).
- Travel within the province for student-related activities.

Not eligible examples

- Travel outside of the province without prior Ministry approval.
- Anything directly related to the normal curriculum.
- Teacher or classroom resources, eg computer.
- Capital improvements (eg building-related).

Gaming Grants schedule

1. Apply for following school year between April 1 to June 30.
2. After PAC fiscal year-end and within 90 days afterwards, submit the Gaming Account Summary Report for prior school year.
3. Funds generally disbursed by September 30.
4. PACs approve and control final allocation disbursement.

Gaming Grants: best practices

- Ask the school community (parents, guardians, teachers, staff) for project ideas to fund, ensuring that any project is allowable under the BC Gaming rules.
- Always pay any vendor directly, rather than through the school. This ensures appropriate separation of jurisdiction in case of audit.
- Ensure your minutes record any decision regarding gaming fund allocation, including noting quorum and attendance.
- Make sure you have a copy of your bylaws.

Treasury: best practices (1)

- Utilize two bank accounts, one for gaming grants and one for unrestricted funds. Name accounts clearly.
- Always use two signatures for cheques.
- Limit online bank access to reporting functions only.
- Present and publish monthly financial statements at PAC meetings.
- All PAC officers are normally signatories at the bank. Ensure you have more than two.
- Use a low cost, community-minded bank, like VanCity.

In general, for expenses incurred by a PAC officer, approval should be two *other* signatories.

Treasury: best practices (2)

- When electing a treasurer, some accounting experience is helpful but not mandatory.
- When in doubt, ask for help (Vancouver DPAC will connect you with someone who can help)

Aim for maximum transparency and clarity.

Treasury: other

- If your PAC is a registered society or charity, there may be other annual filings that need to be submitted.
- If there are other annual filings required, create a list for future PAC usage.
- Always save copies of all submissions in your online repository (Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Dropbox, or Box). Make sure the “owner” of this cloud repository is the permanent PAC email address (not a personal email).

V. 1, October 2016

Please edit and improve, and teach future parents. Nathan WILKES, 20161012

V. 2, June 2017

Minor edits and several additions. Nathan WILKES, 20170625

V. 3, September 2017

Minor edits and several additions. Nathan WILKES, 20170920

Colophon