

Parent Participation Organization — PPO

Info-Flash Topics

- Powers of the GB
- Role of the PPO
- The School Budget
- Field Trips
- Bullying and Violence
- Fees charged to Parents

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Brainstorming topics for PPO members:

Do parents have specific expertise that would be useful, helpful, educational?

How can we help to increase enrolment?

Would teachers want to have grandparents or other seniors volunteer to read and be read to on a regular basis?

Do we need to fund raise?

Numerous questions arise at the beginning of every school year about the functions and powers of a Parent Participation Organization (PPO). They come from Principals, parent members of the Governing Board as well as from parents who want to know what they would have to do if they joined the Parent Participation Organization. Consequently, it seems timely that clarity be brought to the role of the PPO and its relationship vis-à-vis the parents of the school, the Governing Board and the school administration.

A decision whether or not to create a PPO is made by the parents who are present at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of parents in the fall. Normally, an explanation of the role of the PPO will be offered at the AGA by the current PPO chair (if there is one), by the School Principal or Governing Board Chair. Some preparations need to have been done prior to the AGA in order to meet the requirements of the second paragraph of article 96 of the Education Act (EA).

Many schools that choose to form a PPO simply call it by the school name. Others assign it a name such as the Parents' Activity Committee. Some PPOs have been created on a voluntary basis; i.e. parents at the AGA decide that anyone who is interested may become a member; or, they may decide to limit the number of volunteers. In some cases, the entire parent body is elected to the PPO with the status of some parents being active or inactive. In this particular situation, an inactive status could change to active at any time during the school year. The AGA parents must determine the operating rules of the PPO but more often than not, the AGA parents delegate that responsibility to the members of the newly-formed PPO.

The Educational Project of a school is developed and implemented with the participation of the entire school community. To improve student success, the Educational Project lays out detailed orientations and objectives that are geared specifically to the school and its community. The Educational Project must respect the Education Act, the Basic School regulation and the programs of studies established by the Ministry.

Although it is the responsibility of the Governing Board to see to its implementation and periodic evaluation, the PPO is called upon to encourage parents to get involved, to participate, to take an active role both in ensuring that the Educational Project is a living document and in fostering their child's success. Parents who know what is happening at school have a greater likelihood of knowing what is happening in their children's lives.

Article 96.3 of the EA encourages communication and exchange between the PPO and the Governing Board parents. The PPO is the vehicle by which parents connect with one another, share their ideas and concerns and promote academic success. Parents are an important component of school life and can be instrumental in promoting their school by word of mouth. The concerns of the PPO are relayed to the parents who sit on the Governing Board for discussion and/or action.

With declining enrolment and government cutbacks, schools are finding it increasingly difficult to offer students cultural, outdoor or other activities outside of the curriculum. For these reasons, many PPOs have become the fundraising arm of the school. This responsibility may be mandated by the AGA parents, not by the Governing Board as it does not have the authority to do so, or the PPO members themselves may take on the responsibility and try to involve as many other parents as possible. For instance, some PPOs assume responsibility for Staff Appreciation Week and coordinate various celebrations by providing fresh baked goods for the staff, etc.

The school is the responsibility of the Principal and it is important that a good relationship be developed with the school administration in order to keep everyone moving forward toward the goal of student success.

The money raised through various fundraising endeavours organized by PPO members, is considered a voluntary contribution to the school, deposited into ‘... a designated fund created for that purpose..’ (EA article 94).

The management of the fund is to be supervised by the Governing Board in collaboration with the School Principal.



Conclusion

Although few details are provided about the operation of PPOs other than what is found in articles 96 – 96.4, it would be prudent for schools to develop specific operating rules for the PPO. While the meetings do not have to be formal, the following suggestions should be considered:

- * Elect a chair and secretary-treasurer.
- * Schedule monthly meetings.
- * Establish a comfortable working relationship with the Governing Board Chairman and the school administration.
- * Keep the lines of communication between the PPO and Governing Board open.
- * If you are fundraising on behalf of the school, provide a monthly report (in person or in writing) of the PPO's activities to the Governing Board. In many cases, a parent member of the Governing Board also sits on the PPO. This makes the flow of information effortless.
- * If you are fundraising on behalf of the school, make sure that your event respects School Board policies and the laws regulating such events (e.g. casino night, spaghetti dinner, raffles, etc.).
- * Take the time to write down the rules of operation that work for your PPO. If your parents have not participated in creating the rules of operation, make sure to share them and be open to feedback.