

PAC Constitution and Bylaws Development Worksheet

Before you start: This worksheet is a general governance planning tool. This workshop is neither exhaustive of your school's unique requirements nor legal advice. PACs are governed by the BC School Act. Some PACs may also be incorporated as non-profits and therefore have additional obligations under the BC Societies Act. Before adopting or amending your constitution or bylaws, confirm the requirements that apply to your PAC and check current legislation and applicable district requirements, and/or seek out professional policy advice.

Part 1. Research and Consultation

Why are we doing this?

Check all that apply:

- ☐ We are a new PAC and have no constitution or bylaws yet
- ☐ Our documents are out of date or do not match the School Act
- ☐ Our district asked us to update or file them
- ☐ Something went wrong (a dispute, an unclear vote, a money question) and our rules did not help
- ☐ We want clearer, more welcoming language/rules for all families
- ☐ We want to change how we elect, meet, vote or handle money
- ☐ We are becoming (or no longer want to be) a registered society
- ☐ Other:

Write your "why" in one or two plain sentences:

Every communication and announcement of writing or amending your Constitution should answer five questions:

1. What are we changing or creating?
2. Why now?
3. What stays the same (if any)?
4. How can I have my say, and by when?
5. When and how will members vote?

Optional activity: Draft a sample announcement using the five questions.

1.2 Communications and consultation plan

Use the same steps for a new PAC or an amendment. Decide who is told, who is asked, and who decides.

- ☐ Choose a lead person for communications
- ☐ List channels that reach all families (email, school newsletter, social media, paper copy, school app, text)
- ☐ Plan for languages spoken in your school community and for families without internet
- ☐ Set dates: first announcement, feedback period, draft shared, notice of vote, vote
- ☐ Choose how feedback arrives (survey, open meeting, email, comment box) and who reads it
- ☐ Plan to report back "what we heard and what we changed"

Action item: Create timeline and communication channels

Levels of involvement:

- Inform = tell them.
- Consult = ask for input before deciding.
- Collaborate = work on it together.
- Decide = has a vote or final say.

Who	Level	Why	Name / how / when
PAC executive	Collaborate	Leads the work and brings the draft to members	
General membership (all parents and caregivers at the school)	Consult, then Decide	Members vote to adopt or amend	
Principal	Consult (required)	The School Act says bylaws are made in consultation with the principal	
Teachers and school staff	Inform	They work with the PAC and should know its rules	
School board	Inform and file (check with your DPAC if this is mandatory)	Receives your documents; may have its own PAC policy or sample bylaws	
District PAC (DPAC)	Consult (check with your DPAC if this is mandatory)	Has seen many examples across the district	

Who	Level	Why	Name / how / when
BCCPAC	Consult (optional)	Guidance, templates and workshops for PACs	
Families who are rarely heard from (newcomers, multilingual families, caregivers who are not parents, shift workers)	Collaborate or Consult	The rules should work for them too	
Students (where age-appropriate)	Inform or Consult (optional)	Hear what they notice about PAC activities	
Bookkeeper / insurer	Inform	Money rules and liability coverage	
BC Registries	File (Society only)	Records your constitution and bylaws	

1.3 Look at other PACs' documents

You do not need to start from scratch. Collect two or three examples. Many are on school or district websites; others you can ask for by email (most PACs are happy to share). Check with your DPAC or other PACs for sample or required bylaws. BCCPAC also has templates. Societies can also read the BC Registries model bylaws.

Whose document	Link to where it's stored	What we liked	What does not fit us

1.4 Amending only: which sections are we focusing on?

ActFirst find the filed, signed, most recent version (check with the principal or district office if you cannot find it). Read it all the way through, then mark what needs work.

Section	Potential Action Item: Keep, clarify, change, add or remove	What do we want revised? Why?
Name		
Purposes		
Membership		
Meetings and notice		
Quorum and voting		
Executive / officers and their duties		
Elections, nominations and terms		
Money and signing authority		
School planning council and DPAC representatives		
Dissolution		
How to amend		
Language and definitions		
Other:		

Part 2. The Constitution

Think of the constitution as your PAC's short, stable "who we are and why we exist". It should very rarely change.

2.1 Purposes

The School Act gives every PAC its basic purpose: through its elected officers, a PAC may advise the board and the principal and staff on matters relating to the school. Your constitution should name that purpose (note: whether the School Act purpose is explicit or not on your Constitution, you still have to be compliant to it).

You may add purposes that fit your activities (for example, parent education, community events, supporting student programs).

Important considerations for any purpose you add.

- Write it broadly so future PACs are not boxed in. "Support student learning and school community" lasts; "raise money for the 2027 playground" does not.
- It must not conflict with the School Act. For example, a PAC advises; it does not run the school, hire or direct staff, or take over decisions that belong to the principal or school administration.

Sample purposes:

- strengthen communication between families and the school;
- create opportunities for families to connect with one another;
- support activities that benefit students and the school community;
- encourage inclusive participation in school life.

ACTION ITEM: DRAFTING THE CONSTITUTION

Section 1: The name of this [Society / Parent Advisory Council] is:

Section 2: The purposes of [Name of PAC] are:

- a.
- b.
- c.

Section 3: Interpretation of Terms (OPTIONAL):

- a.
- b.
- c.

PAC Reflection question: Could a future PAC still reasonably operate under this purpose?

2.3 Interpretation of Terms

This section is not required to be included in your Constitution. However, this gives your PAC an opportunity to provide inclusive or indisputable terminology that is used within your Constitution and Bylaws, especially if you have a non-conventional governing process. Including this in your Constitution will mean you will need to vote within your membership every time you change the definition. An alternative is creating an internal document, accessible to your members, but not necessarily included in your Constitution.

Term	Things to define in the context of your Constitution and Bylaws	Our definition
Parent / primary caregiver	Include guardians, foster parents, grandparents, kin and anyone with day-to-day care of a student. Example: "primary caregivers of a student enrolled at the school". (Note that the School Act definition of "parent" already reaches beyond birth parents)	
Student / enrolled	Current students only, or also incoming students for next year?	
Voting member / non-voting member	Are teachers and community members welcome as non-voting? Is a membership application process needed?	
Executive / officers	Which roles exist (chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, others)? What happens when these roles are vacant?	
General meeting / AGM	Which meetings are open to all members and can vote? (check based on School Act or Societies Act requirement)	
Quorum	Minimum number or percentage present for a vote to count (check based on School Act or Societies Act requirement)	
Majority / special resolution	Simple majority vs. two-thirds for big decisions. Societies must use a special resolution to change constitution or bylaws.	
Written notice	Does email count? How many days?	
Principal / board / district	Use the School Act terms	
In good standing / conflict of interest	Only if you use them; define simply	

Part 3. The Bylaws

Bylaws are the detailed rules for running the PAC. Under the School Act, a PAC makes its bylaws in consultation with the principal.

3.1 Required by the School Act (every PAC)

The Act requires bylaws governing your meetings and the business and conduct of your affairs, including the four items below. Check the current wording of the applicable Acts and your district's resources when you draft.

- ☐ How does it elect its officers
- ☐ Election of a member to represent the Parents' Advisory Council on the District Parents' Advisory Council
- ☐ Dissolution of Parents' Advisory Council

3.2 Society only: Items from the Societies Act not already covered above

Skip this section if you are not registered as a non-profit. If you are, compare your draft with the current Societies Act and the BC Registries model bylaws, which list the required contents.

- ☐ Membership (how members are admitted, if there are different classes of memberships, how members maintain their "good standing" status).
- ☐ Society's directors (this is likely the PAC's elected officers but it does not have to be, are there other roles appointed, number of directors required)
- ☐ General Meetings (what meets a quorum, whether there is proxy voting, form of voting, note: Some voting under School Act must be a secret ballot)
- ☐ Any restrictions on activities or powers that the Non-Profit may carry on or exercise.

ACTION ITEM: DRAFTING THE BYLAWS

Prompts	How it will be written
Section 1 - Membership <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who are considered "voting members"? Who are considered "non-voting members"? What are the privileges and responsibilities of all members? What are privileges and responsibilities specific to the type of membership? Optional: Are you intending to write a policy that outlines "good standing" membership or consequences for non-compliance? 	Section 1 - Membership <ol style="list-style-type: none">
Section 2 - Meetings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How often general meetings are held, and how members are told (notice, method, days) 	Section 2 - Meetings <ol style="list-style-type: none">

Prompts	How it will be written
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who can attend, who can vote, and who can attend but not vote? What makes a Quorum? How decisions are made for what kind of meetings? (show of hands, secret ballot for elections, electronic voting) Who can call a special meeting? 	
<p>Section 3 - Electing PAC Officers (optional: and DPAC delegate)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What are the PAC officer roles? (Note: You do not need to write an exhaustive list of responsibilities that can be in your policies.) How are the officers elected? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What happens if the officer role is vacant? How does an officer resign or get removed from their role? How is the DPAC representative (and any alternate) chosen and when? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Length of term and how they report back to the PAC? Who attends if the representative cannot? 	<p>Section 3 - Electing PAC Officers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <ol style="list-style-type: none">
<p>Section xx - Finances and Records</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How are finances and other records kept? (Tip: Do not make this procedural. This can be in reference to a policy document which expands on it). Do you need to make implicit who is/isn't remunerated in the activities of the PAC? (eg. Non-profit board members are not allowed to be remunerated for their board role). 	
<p>Section xx - Other (Update section titles as needed)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What other activities or restrictions do you want to implicitly write in your bylaws? Should these be categorized under one section or should it be categorized in multiple sections to make it easier to locate, read, and/or interpret? 	
<p>Section xx - Dissolution</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How a decision to dissolve is made (notice, vote threshold)? What happens to leftover money and property (for example, given to another PAC in the district or the school, never to members)? Who closes accounts and finishes the paperwork? 	

3.4 Bylaw or policy?

If a rule needs to be permanent and require a formal voting process, put it in the bylaws. If it is a working detail that may change often, use a policy that the PAC officers can update and members can see. Ask each question about a rule you are drafting.

PAC Reflection questions:	If yes	Why
Does the School Act (or Societies Act, if registered) require it?	Bylaw	Required content cannot be left out
Does it decide who is a member, who can vote, how people are elected, quorum, or how rules are changed?	Bylaw	Members need a say and certainty
Does it protect members or the PAC from conflict, risk or misuse of money?	Bylaw / with more details in a Policy	Stronger protection and fairness
Should changing it need notice and a member vote?	Bylaw	Bylaws change only through the formal process
Is it a procedure, form, detail or dollar figure that changes often?	Policy	Easy to update without a vote of all members
Can the executive reasonably decide it on its own?	Policy	Keeps bylaws short and readable

3.5 Sample policies that need to be created

ACTION ITEM: Create a list of policies that need to be drafted / rewritten after writing or amending the bylaws

- ☐ Meeting Procedures
- ☐ Finance Policy
- ☐ Fundraising Policy
- ☐ What else?
 - ☐
 - ☐
 - ☐

Part 4. Voting and filing

4.1 New PAC Checklist

- ☐ Parents or caregivers apply to the school board (through the principal) to establish a PAC; there is only one PAC per school
- ☐ Consult the principal on the draft constitution and bylaws
- ☐ Give members (parents) notice of the founding meeting and share the draft ahead of time
- ☐ Hold the meeting, discuss, and vote to adopt (minutes record the motion, the vote count and the date)
- ☐ Elect the first officers using the new bylaws
- ☐ Give the signed copy to the principal
- ☐ File a copy with the board / district office as the district requires, and ask whether the district has other requirements (for example insurance coverage conditions)
- ☐ Open a bank account in the PAC's name with at least two signers
- ☐ Non-profit only: choose a name, confirm the minimum number of incorporators, and file with BC Registries under the Societies Act
- ☐ Keep the original documents in a central storage accessible to all elected officers and share the final version with all members

4.2 Existing PAC: Follow your own amendment bylaw

ACTION ITEM: Your current bylaws control how they can be changed. Fill in what yours says.

	What do our existing Bylaws say?
Who may propose an amendment?	
How many days' notice, and by what method?	
What must the notice contain (exact wording)?	
Which meeting can vote (AGM, general meeting)?	
Quorum needed	
Vote needed (majority, two-thirds, other)	
Voting method (show of hands, ballot)	

ACTION ITEM: Go through this checklist when going through the process of Bylaw Amendment:

- ☐ Executive agrees on the proposed text and who presents it to
- ☐ Principal is consulted on the changes
- ☐ Notice with the exact wording goes out on time, in the way the bylaw requires, and a record of sending is kept
- ☐ Meeting has quorum; the vote is counted and recorded in minutes
- ☐ Only changes included in the notice are voted on
- ☐ Amended bylaws are dated and signed; old versions are kept
- ☐ Copy filed with the principal and the district office
- ☐ Society only: file the changes with BC Registries (changes to bylaws and constitution have filing deadlines and constitution changes take effect on filing; check current rules)
- ☐ Updated version shared with all members and posted where families can find it

Part 5. Implementing and evaluating

Not every PAC is a non-profit society, but every PAC is governed by the School Act. Use the accountability points below whichever you are.

5.1 Conversation prompts for the elected officers

- What do we now do differently at meetings, elections or with money?
- Who needs training or a briefing on the new rules?
- Which rules are we unsure about, and where could we get advice?
- Is anything in the document confusing, hard to follow or unfair to some families?
- Are we recording our votes and decisions the way the bylaws say?
- What should the next executive know before their first meeting?

PAC Reflection question: Are there other questions we should consider when evaluating our Constitution and Bylaws?

5.2 Ways to engage the wider membership

- ☐ Share a one-page plain-language summary and the full document in each language your families use
- ☐ Present the changes at a general meeting, with time for questions
- ☐ Hold a drop-in or online session at more than one time of day
- ☐ Offer childcare, interpretation and food where you can
- ☐ Add a short "What our Bylaws mean for you" item to the newsletter or PAC web page
- ☐ Run a short survey a few months later: do families feel welcome and informed?
- ☐ Welcome new families at the start of the year with a simple orientation

PAC Reflection question: What are other ways we can engage our members that are unique to our PAC?

5.3 Consulting administrators

- ☐ Give the principal the draft early and ask how it fits school and district practice
- ☐ Ask whether the district has bylaws requirements, filing steps, insurance conditions or sample language
- ☐ Agree how the principal will share information with the PAC and how the PAC will advise the principal
- ☐ Confirm how the school and PAC will share space, fundraising and communication with members
- ☐ Give the principal and district office the final signed version
- ☐ Set a regular time for the chair and principal to meet

PAC Reflection question: Are there any conflicts or bottlenecks we need to discuss or negotiate with the school administrators?

5.4 Accountability points

What	When [Write next date]	Who is responsible [Write name of the point of contact]
Reads and discusses the constitution and bylaws	First meeting after each election	Chair and Executives (all elected officials)
Copy given to the new elected officers (handover binder or shared folder)	Each year at transition	Secretary (or another elected officer)
Check that required filings and school/district copies are current	Each fall (or end of Society's fiscal year)	Secretary (or another elected officer)
Review of how the rules are working, with member feedback	Once a year	Working group (can consist of elected officers and other members)
Full review of constitution and bylaws	Every 3 years (choose your cycle)	Working group (can consist of elected officers and other members)
Review triggered by a change in the School Act, district policy or a problem	As needed	Chair and Executives (all elected officials)
Review of financial practices and signing authority	Each year before the AGM	Treasurer (or another elected officer) and an optional member not on the executive
Society only: annual report and filings with BC Registries	Each year by the deadline	Secretary (or another elected officer)

PAC Reflection question: What will tell us the new rules are working? What will we change if they are not?