

**Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability
of PAC and DPAC Executives**

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Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability of PAC and DPAC Executives

Every organization needs good leadership. Your council's leaders will facilitate the membership in setting the course for your organization and achieving its goals.

The executive's role is:

- to provide leadership
- to take initiative
- to carry on the council's day-to-day business.

The executive's authority comes from two sources:

- the council's constitution and bylaws
- direction of the membership.

Responsibility of Executive Members

Council executive members have important responsibilities:

- to understand and abide by the council's constitution, bylaws, and code of ethics
- to understand and carry out the responsibilities of their executive office set out in the bylaws
- to ensure that the council is involved only in activities it is authorized to do under its constitution
- to consult with the membership, to manage the council's affairs by
 - establishing direction, policy, and procedures
 - being involved in planning
 - delegating tasks and responsibilities, with supervision, to committees
- to report to the membership and abide by the membership's direction.

The executive, as a group and as individuals, is responsible to the membership for everything they do.

Duties of Executive Members

Executives are expected to act with the highest standards. Once elected, executives

- assume responsibility for the council's affairs
- owe a duty of trust to
 - students in the school and district
 - the council's membership
 - each other as executive members
 - the council's staff, if any
 - anyone who may be affected by the executive's actions or decisions.

What does this mean?

This means, as an executive member, you have a duty to put the council's interests ahead of your own. You should not act in the interests of a special group or in your own self-interest.

In addition

- be careful, honest, and forthright
- think about what you are doing and saying, and ask yourself
- ? Am I doing what's right for the council, its members, and the parents of this school and district? Do I have their interests at heart rather than my own interests or the interests of another organization or person with whom I am associated?
- ? Am I being honest and up front with the other executive members? What would I want another executive member to do or say if they were in my position?
- ? Am I acting in accordance with the decisions and policies of the executive and membership, or am I acting in some way contrary to those decisions and policies?
- ? Do I have a personal interest (financial or personal benefit not available to others) which I have not disclosed to the executive or membership?
- ? What would the other executive members and the council membership expect me to do here?

Upholding decisions

As an executive member, you are obligated to uphold the decisions of the executive and membership. If you cannot in conscience uphold a decision, then you must resign from the executive. You are entitled to try to persuade others to change their views, decisions, or policies, but outside the executive, you must act and speak in accordance with the executive's and membership's decisions.

Fulfilling Your Responsibilities as an Executive Member

The job of an executive member is challenging and rewarding. You are helping to involve parents in improving the quality of our public education system.

To fulfill your role better:

- Attend meetings and stay informed of the council's business.
- Read what you are given. Someone thought it was important for you to know.
- Ask questions. Make sure you understand the issues before you make decisions and vote. Be reasonable—don't insist on information that won't make a difference.
- Take on only what you can do effectively and within a reasonable time, and then do it. If you can't, talk to the president/chair or another executive member promptly.
- If you have a special skill or expertise (for example, you are an accountant), you must act with the same standard of care as you would in your professional work.

Note: There is nothing inherently wrong with having a conflict of interest, or making a personal profit by providing goods or services to the council, school, or district.

The problem arises when an executive member fails to put the interests of the council first. A prudent executive member will immediately disclose the conflict and avoid using their position for personal gain.

The terms “president” and “chair” are often used interchangeably.

The meeting agenda is usually the president’s responsibility. It is good practice to consult with the executive, membership, principal (for PACs), or superintendent/school board liaison (for DPACs) before the meeting to give them an opportunity for input.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when an executive member could benefit financially from a decision of the council that they can influence or vote on.

The executive member has a duty to report the conflict promptly to the executive and membership, and refrain from using their position to personal advantage. Failure to report is a breach of duty to the council, and may lead to personal liability for any loss to the council.

Assignment of Responsibilities

It is important for your council to have a clear and fair assignment of responsibilities for executive members. This allows everyone—executive, membership, principal, and staff—to understand what is expected of each executive member.

A. The President/Chair may

- speak on behalf of the council
- consult with council members
- preside at membership and executive meetings
- ensure that an agenda is prepared
- appoint committees where authorized by the membership or executive
- ensure that the council is represented in school and district activities
- ensure that council activities are aimed at achieving the purposes set out in the constitution
- be a signing officer
- submit an annual report

B. The Vice-President may

- support the president
- assume the duties of the president in the president’s absence or upon request
- assist the president in the performance of his or her duties
- accept extra duties as required
- be a DPAC representative
- be a signing officer
- submit an annual report

C. The Secretary may

- ensure that members are notified of meetings
- record and file minutes of all meetings
- keep an accurate copy of the constitution and bylaws, and make copies available to members upon request

- prepare and maintain other documentation as requested by the membership or executive
- issue and receive correspondence on behalf of the council
- ensure safekeeping of all records of the council
- *DPAC—keep an accurate record of PAC representatives*
- *DPAC—assist the president in providing information to local news media*
- may be a signing officer
- submit an annual report

D. The Treasurer may

- be a signing officer
- ensure all funds of the council are properly accounted for
- disburse funds as authorized by the membership or executive
- ensure that proper financial records and books of account are maintained
- report on all receipts and disbursements at general and executive meetings
- make financial records and books of account available to members upon request
- have the financial records and books of account ready for inspection or audit annually
- with the assistance of the executive, draft an annual budget
- ensure that another signing officer has access to the financial records and books of account in the treasurer’s absence
- submit an annual financial statement at the annual general meeting

Financial records should be kept for seven years. Other documents may be kept according to their value or precedent-setting nature. Minutes can be a valuable history of the council.

E. The DPAC Representative may

- attend all DPAC meetings and represent, speak, and vote on behalf of the PAC
- maintain current registration of the PAC
- report regularly to the membership and executive on all matters relating to the DPAC
- seek and give input to the DPAC on behalf of the PAC
- receive, circulate, and post DPAC newsletters, brochures, and announcements
- receive and act on all other communications from the DPAC
- liaise with other parents and DPAC representatives
- submit an annual report

Annual reports are important because they

- provide an opportunity to review personal and council goals and achievements
- provide a record of actions taken
- outline responsibilities for those considering running for an executive position.

F. Members at Large (Directors in a DPAC) may

- serve in a capacity to be determined by the council at the time of election, and at other times as the council requires
- submit an annual report

G. The Immediate Past President may

- advise and support the membership and executive
- provide information about resources, contacts, and other matters
- submit an annual report

H. The School Planning Council (SPC) representatives may

- attend all SPC meetings
- represent, speak, and vote on behalf of the PAC at SPC meetings
- request and take direction from the membership and executive
- be strong advocates for meaningful parent involvement in the school and school planning
- provide a written report to all general and executive meetings
- attend general and executive meetings as directed by the membership or executive
- submit an annual report
- at least one representative must be an Executive member

Choosing Good Leadership

Choosing good leadership is the most important decision your council will make all year. Your organization's effectiveness is often a direct result of the quality of its leadership.

Before election night, parents who are considering running for a position, as well as those recruiting others, should review the responsibilities listed above or contained in your bylaws. Executives are more often successful when parents take on jobs they like and are qualified for. Volunteers serve their organizations better, and enjoy their work more, when they do what they are good at.

Tips for finding volunteers to do the important job of the executive:

- Strike a nominating committee to solicit volunteers before election night. (Your bylaws may provide for one.) People respond better to a phone call ahead of time than to a plea at an open meeting.
- Offer to put new parents in touch with experienced parents to explain the job.
- Give a clear outline of the duties and time commitment of each position. Describe past activities and successes. New jobs for new people are less intimidating with background information and a personalized helping hand.
- Encourage retiring executive to stay on in an advisory capacity.
- Invite prospective volunteers to an executive meeting to find out first hand what goes on.
- Encourage new parents to put their names forward. New parents bring new involvement and new ideas.

A Special Note on Choosing a Treasurer

With the large amounts of money many PACs and DPACs handle, the job of Treasurer has become central to the council's smooth operation. Proper financial management will help the council financially support its goals.

The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring safe custody of the council's money. Ideally, candidates for treasurer should have accounting or bookkeeping experience. At the least, they should be comfortable with numbers and familiar with the basics of financial record-keeping. They should also be attentive to detail and timelines.

The Treasurer should feel comfortable working closely with the President and others, as he or she will be asked to disclose record-keeping and account for financial transactions.

Respecting Diversity in Your Council Executive

PACs and DPACs are striving to become truly representative of all the parents in their school communities.

Through sensitivity to the barriers many parents face in becoming involved in their children's education, council leaders can draw all parents in and pave the way for them to take on leadership roles. This begins with a close look at the reasons under-represented groups may not participate in council activities. Councils and council leaders need to find ways to overcome these barriers and actively recruit parents from all parts of the school community.