



13 Operations and Internal Management

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This information leaflet is intended for parents who want to become familiar with everything that has to do with the operations of committees and various participation organizations in the education network: Governing Boards, Parent Participation Organizations, Parents' Committees, Special Needs Advisory Committees, regional structures of the FCPQ.

Note: in this document the term "committee" is used to designate any or all of these organizations.

Resources

To obtain reference material and to find useful tools or competent resource persons, please contact the FCPQ.

We offer:

- Advice;
- Information brochures;
- References;
- Training workshops.

References

Comité de parents de la Commission scolaire du Val-des-Cerfs (2001), Mode de fonctionnement et régie interne (www.csvdc.qc.ca).

Girard, F. (1987). *Les assemblées délibérantes*, Montréal: Éditions de l'homme; Morin, V. (1938). *Procédure des assemblées délibérantes*, Montréal: Beauchemin.

Picard, G. (1972). *Code des règles de procédure de la CSN*, Montréal: CSN. Secrétariat général de l'Université de Montréal (1991), *Guide de procédure des assemblées délibérantes*.

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Getting through the maze!



When starting out in a participation structure, it is not easy to make one's way through the technical jargon used by those who already have a certain experience with these structures. And the education milieu has its particularities that challenge even the most experienced participants. It can be quite disconcerting!

In the education network, what do we mean by operating procedures, rules of internal management and procedures for meetings? To what extent must we follow deliberative assembly procedures such as those in "Robert's Rules of Order"? How do we find a way through the technical maze of committee rules? Let's find out.

Operating procedures

For a more detailed description of operating procedures, consult the leaflets already produced by the FCPQ on each of these organizations.

The operating procedures ("mode of operation" in the Education Act) for educational bodies are enshrined in the Education Act. They have force of law.

Thus, sections 42 to 55 of this Act prescribe the composition and formation of **Governing Boards**: number of members, nomination, term of office, vacancy, and so on. Then the actual operating procedures follow:

- Choosing a Chair, term of office, function (s.56-59);
- Substitute Chair (s. 60);
- Quorum and lack of quorum (s. 61-62);
- Vote and decision in students' interests (s.63-64);
- Minimum number of meetings, services and facilities (s.65);
- Annual budget (s. 66);
- Internal management, public nature of meetings, closed door meetings (67-68);
- Minutes (s.69);
- Conflict of interest and immunity of members (s. 70-73).

The Act is much less precise in the case of a **Parent Participation Organization** (PPO). It allows the General Assembly to determine the name, the composition and the operating and election rules of the PPO (s. 96).



It prescribes only two operating procedures (s. 96.4):

- Right to meet on school premises;
- Right to use the school's support services and facilities.

In the case of school board advisory committees (**Parents' Committee, Advisory Committee on Student Transportation and Special Needs Advisory Committee**), the Act establishes some operating procedures:

- Place of meetings (s.194);
- Internal management, minimum number of meetings and participation from a distance (s.195);
- Immunity (s.196);
- Annual budget (s.197).

Lastly, note that a Council of Commissioners is also bound by a certain number of operating rules with which Parent Commissioners in particular should become very familiar.

What is important about this list is that these procedures become rights for the groups in question; they may use the necessary means to demand that the procedures be enforced.

Rules of internal management

As we have just seen, the Act requires each group that it establishes to adopt rules of internal management. These rules vary according to each milieu in relation to the circumstances and the particular context of each group. They may be changed and are therefore not permanent, as are the above-mentioned operating procedures. They deal with everything that might assist a committee to operate effectively and conduct its meetings efficiently. They obviously do not have force of law and cannot be inconsistent with the procedures prescribed by the Act.

For reasons of convenience, several educational committees or groups are in the habit of reproducing in their rules of internal management the legal operating procedures. This is why it is essential that we clearly distinguish between them in this leaflet.

Below, you will find two complete sections on the rules of internal management.

Procedures for meetings

There are several works on deliberative assembly procedures. One of the most popular is Robert's Rules of Order (francophone groups in Québec commonly use the Code Morin). These guides do not have force of law. Several groups, such as universities and unions, adopt rules such as these to ensure that their numerous meetings operate effectively.



An entire leaflet is devoted to rules of debate and procedure: Procedures for Meetings (No. 22)

These guides contain both operating procedures and rules of internal management as described above, but they are mainly known for their rules of debate and procedure that promote order during debates and discussions leading up to a decision.

Several educational groups have introduced into their rules of internal management items from one or another of these guides, particularly in relation to conducting debates. This is a local choice that may prove useful on occasion. When there are important decisions or disagreements in a group over a major issue, these tools provided ahead of time are most welcome.

Even if they are not part of the rules of internal management of your committee, it will be worthwhile to know the basics of deliberative assembly procedures. You avoid being taken by surprise if someone refers to them or misuses them.

Rules of internal management: the main items

Rules of internal management differ greatly depending on the nature of a group.

For instance, we know that the Act does not set out the operations of the **PPO**. Its rules must therefore cover the most basic items: composition, formation, Chair, meetings, reports and so on.

It is different for the **Governing Board** where several elements of its operations are prescribed by the Act.

School board advisory committees start with very little in the way of operating procedures prescribed by the Act.

In all cases, we must at least ensure that a group can rely on some kind of document to facilitate proper operations.

Following is an outline of what should or could be included in the rules of internal management of a Governing Board, a PPO and a Parents' Committee:

- Operating procedures (Education Act): these items are already prescribed by the Education Act. For convenience, many committees transcribe them in their rules of internal management. However, it should be noted that this leads to the belief that they may be modified, which is not the case.

Operations and Internal Management

- In the list below, you will find **essential** items that must appear in any good compilation of rules of internal management.
- Finally, there are a certain number of points that it is **desirable** to elaborate upon in the rules of internal management.

GROUP SUBJECT	GOVERNING BOARD	PARENT PARTICIPATION ORGANIZATION	PARENTS' COMMITTEE	OBSERVATIONS
Composition				
Number of members	Educ. Act- 42-46	Essential	Educ. Act -189	
Eligibility	Educ. Act - 42	Essential	Educ. Act -189	Avoid risk of discrimination
Substitute	No	Possible	Educ. Act -47,189	
Term of office	Educ. Act -53-55	Essential	Educ. Act -189	
Replacement	Educ. Act -55	Essential	To be determined	See below:
Repeated absences	No dismissal Action procedures Possible	Procedures to be established	No dismissal Action procedures Possible	participation
Formation				
Election procedures	Educ. Act -47-52	Essential	No	
Officers				
Chair	Educ. Act -56-60	Essential	Educ. Act -190	
Vice-chair or substitute chair	Educ. Act: a substitute, not a Vice-chair	Desirable	To be determined	
Secretary	Educ. Act -69	Desirable	Essential	
Procedures for appointing	No	Essential	Essential	
Executive Committee				
Composition	No	Not recommended	Essential	
Procedures for appointing	No	Not recommended	Essential	
Quorum	Educ. Act - 61-62	Essential	Essential	See below
Meetings				
Calendar	Educ. Act -LIP-67 To be determined	Essential	Essential	
Special Meetings	Essential	Essential	Essential	
Public Meetings public question period	Educ. Act -68 To be defined	Essential	Essential	See below
First annual meeting	Educ. Act -57	Essential	Educ. Act -190	
Notice of meeting	Essential	Essential	Essential	See below
Agenda	Essential	Essential	Essential	See below
Reference material	Essential	Essential	Essential	
Vote	Educ. Act - 63-64	Essential	Essential	
Plan of action	Essential	Essential	Essential	
Records/Minutes	Educ. Act -69	Essential	Essential	See below
Annual report	Essential	Essential	Essential	
Funding	Essential	Essential	Essential	
Budget	Essential	Desirable	Essential	
Administration	Essential	Desirable	Essential	
Reimbursement of members' expenses	Essential	Desirable	Essential	
Report	Essential	Desirable	Essential	
Amendments	Desirable	Desirable	Desirable	See below



For more on this subject, see Leaflet No. 18 on the relation between the Governing Board Chair and the school principal.

Below you will find further information on the content of certain rules of internal management. These are the generally accepted ways of doing things in committees.

Notice of meeting

Before a meeting takes place, the Chair of a meeting or the secretary sends a written notice of meeting to all members. Time frames for the notice of meeting, usually varying from five to seven days, are recorded in the rules. In an urgent situation, a meeting may be called in a shorter time frame, also agreed upon in the rules of internal management.

Preparation of the agenda

An agenda is a document in which we find a list of items to be discussed during a meeting. It is prepared by the Chair and the secretary of a committee or assembly. In the case of a Governing Board, it will be beneficial for the Chair and the school principal to prepare each board meeting together. However, any member may ask that an item be added to the agenda. Usually, the agenda is sent to committee members at the same time as the notice of meeting. The rules of internal management may also include a model of an agenda.

Opening of assembly

In order to have a sitting session, a minimum number of members, besides the Chair and the secretary, is required; this is called a quorum. Appointment of the Chair and secretary as well as the number set for quorum are defined by the Act or the rules of internal management of each committee.



For more information on minutes, see Leaflet No. 19 on the role of secretary.

Checking quorum

The Chair must ensure that only authorized persons are at the meeting table. A member may oppose the presence of a person or at any time submit an objection to the Chair and present his/her arguments. The Chair then makes a decision.

At the set time, the Chair ensures there is a quorum and, if so, declares the meeting open. He/she submits the proposed agenda to the assembly who must adopt it as an ordinary proposal. Before this vote, new items may be added to the proposed agenda at the request of a member. Any subsequent modification during the meeting must be approved by the members present. Next, the Chair successively names items on the agenda for discussion.

Some committees ensure there is a quorum before the start of the meeting and throughout the meeting as well. For these committees, the secretary may enter in the minutes the time of departure of members who leave before the end of the meeting.

Adoption of minutes

To keep a reminder of the fruits of its labours, a committee may agree to produce a written account or minutes of its meetings. The minutes are a tool for recording debates and decisions with strict requirements concerning the description of the meeting.

Minutes are adopted on a proposal of a member, preferably one who was present during the meeting in question. This is not the time to return to the debate on the contents adopted but to ensure that what is written conforms to what was said and voted.



Public question period

It is increasingly common to set aside a period of time during which the public attending the meeting may speak. To bypass this opportunity is often seen as an affront to democracy, especially in representative bodies. With the assistance of rules that are closely followed and clear to all, it is possible to satisfy this public need and to meet the requirements for effective committee operations. For example, we may:

- Include in the agendas of all meetings a public question period, preferably at the beginning of a session, since those who want to speak often hope to address an issue that will be debated during the session;
- Ask speakers to identify themselves, to be brief and to address the Chair;
- Disallow a debate between members of the assembly and members of the public;
- Develop follow-up actions concerning speakers' questions: further communication, special information session if it is a group, etc.;
- Enforce (with some flexibility) the maximum time determined for this activity.

End of assembly

After covering all agenda items, the Chair declares the assembly closed or else accepts a proposal asking that the assembly be closed. Note that an assembly may also be adjourned, that is, interrupted to be continued at a later date.

Amendments to the rules of internal management

It is advantageous for a committee to make provisions for amending its own rules of internal management. This way, during meetings it avoids a situation in which members change a way of operating to suit their own purposes. The following rules are therefore desirable.

- A proposed amendment must be referred to the Chair or the secretary in order to ensure that the matter is substantial enough before being presented to the assembly.
- The proposed amendment must appear as an item on the agenda of an assembly. The notice of meeting of this assembly must mention the proposed amendment. The complete text of the proposed amendment must accompany the notice of meeting.
- To be adopted, a modification to the rules of internal management usually requires a two thirds (2/3) vote in favour by representatives who are present.

Rules of internal management: additional items



For more on this subject see
Leaflet No. 20 on the Parent
Commissioner

All rules of internal management include a certain number of additional items that often arise from the group's previous experience. This is how rules of internal management are gradually improved.

Roles and functions within a committee

This is the most essential part of the rules of internal management. A group may think it unnecessary to specify its expectations of its Chair, its secretary and the other officers it has named (Vice-Chair, 2nd Vice-Chair, Treasurer, communications officer, etc.). Instead, it relies on what is usually expected of these people: running the meetings, keeping records, and so on. Yet there are considerable advantages to defining the committee's expectations of these people, for example by identifying what they should do before, during and after the meetings. When the time comes to name someone to these positions, the committee then has a valuable tool to guide them.

Delegation

One of the additional items in these rules concerns delegation: this point often defines the selection procedures for delegates, their term of office, their obligation to make a report, and so on. Note that the election of a Parent Commissioner to the school board cannot be regulated like any other delegation, although the Parents' Committee may nevertheless formulate its expectations about the role.

External relations

Rules concerning external relations may also be set out: the Governing Board with the school board or the media, the PPO with parents of the Governing Board, the Parents' Committee with the school board, and so on, but these rules should remain flexible.

Sub-committees

Some groups operate with sub-committees. In this case, it is worthwhile to specify what is expected of them and the limits of their mandate.



For more on this subject see
Leaflet No. 22, Procedures for
Meetings.

Consultations

Each advisory body develops its own way of operating. It is a good idea for these committees to adopt procedures that reinforce the credibility of their work.

Code of ethics and professional conduct

Increasingly, committees within public bodies draw the attention of their members to generally accepted principles of ethics and professional conduct. Members are asked to respect the rules regarding making decisions in the students' interest, acting as a reasonable person, the absence of conflict of interest and declaring a conflict of interest, to name a few. Public bodies such as school boards possess codes of ethics and professional conduct that may be used by groups who want to improve their rules of internal management based on provisions of this type.

Participation of members

Rules of internal management also include certain provisions relating to the conduct of members before, during and after the meetings: preparation, regular presence, punctuality, confidentiality, participation in discussions, and so on. Sometimes these rules are divided into two categories: rights and duties of members.

This is the place to include certain conditions concerning repeated absences of a member. Even in groups that do not allow dismissal, it is possible to provide for some follow-up actions towards the absent person: phone call, letter, written request for resignation and so on.

Leaflet No. 13 deals with operating procedures and rules of internal management.

Leaflet No. 22 on procedures for meetings supplements Leaflet 13 in regard to methods of deliberation.

To learn more about the functions, the powers and the place of the various organizations likely to have recourse to these rules, refer to the other leaflets already produced by the FCPQ, especially:

- No. 1 *The Parent Participation Organization, Helping schools be their best!*
- No. 6 *Schools and their World*
- No. 12 *The Governing Board at the Heart of the School*
- No. 14 *The Parents' Committee – Focal Point of Parental Participation*
- No. 15 *The Advisory Committee on Special Needs Students*

Those called on to play a leadership or secretarial role in these organizations will be helped by the following leaflets:

- No. 17 *Chairing the Governing Board, A Rewarding Challenge*
- No. 18 *The Chair of the Governing Board and the School Principal, Working in Tandem*
- No. 21 *Conducting a Meeting*
- No. 19 *The Role of Secretary*

