



VICTORIA
CONFEDERATION
OF
PARENT ADVISORY COUNCILS
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*Speech given by Audrey Smith, VCPAC President
September 26, 2016 General Board of Education SD61 meeting*

The role and responsibilities of VCPAC the DPAC have been questioned by this board a few times. We, the parents, do not question what is meant in Part 2 Section 8.5#4. of the School Act it says:

*“The district parents advisory council may advise the board on **any matter** relating to education **in the school district**”*

VCPAC members understand we may advise you on any matter in the district
They expect their elected officers to do so.

And Section 8.4 #4 when it says:

“There must be only one district parents’ advisory council for each school district.”

We read, VCPAC is the one to advise on matters in the district effecting more than one school. We believe it contravenes the act when you say all PACs have that role and we believe it diminishes our collective voice.

Section 8 #4 states:

*“A parents’ advisory council, **through its elected officers**, may advise the board, the principal and the staff of **the** school respecting **any matter related to the** school”*

We interpret it means, if an individual parent brings a concern about the school to the board or school staff without having already taken it to their PAC then.....

they should be advised to follow the school act and take it to the PAC first and the elected officers would be the ones tasked to advise from there.

Past practice has allowed partners to speak at the board table. We have used that to advise you of the opinion of parents especially when there wasn't time to go through our own consultation process prior to your standing committee meeting. Removing that point of advising will reduce our ability to help inform you of the impact of the decision before you.

Policy 1163

Is a policy that does not limit but provides another avenue for VCPAC to fulfill its role

I quote

“The Board values attitudes and practices that encourage integrity, respect and trust in all relationships.”



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...the Board expects district, school and program level decisions will be made using appropriate consultation process.

...The process selected will optimize the opportunity for partners to provide input”

Further quoting:

“Consultation is:

A ... step in decision making

A process not an outcome

Involves interaction between decision makers and those affected by the decisions

Promotes two-way flow of information and ideas

Arrives at a better solution and more effective implementation “

Further on it says:

“Consultation processes function more effectively when all parties... have access to them”.

Then it says:

“The implementation of decisions is more effective when ... partners have shared in their development.”

AND

“Consultation is more effective when it is commenced at the time that the issue being considered is identified”

For the sake of case study, let us look at the process with the policy before you tonight, please by no means limit the findings to this specific policy and only it. We have much work to do to increase our understanding of the process and how we can do better.

A policy of this size requires time to be reviewed by the parents of 45 PACs and for their representatives to pass that on to VCPAC for discussion that we may:

- gain understanding of where the parents, across the district are in their perspective, --
- elevate our knowledge of the issues being addressed and
- combine our feedback.

Given the holiday schedules and school based events throughout the year we meet 7 times. It takes at least two meetings to get a full turnaround from our members. This



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policy impacts all students, the parents need to go through the process in order to have **shared in the development and accept ownership.**

Upon review there are some things that may need to be brought before the parents for discussion. We do have some concerns, and some feedback. Some of those points have been made tonight already.

Two important ones are:

Though you may tire of hearing it, if the Parents have not had time to review **and discuss** a new policy or change to the way we do our work, then the consultative process is not complete and the draft should return to, at the very least, the standing committee for further discussion.

Regulations for policy 4305 state in section 1 c. that the board will consult GSA **a club, as determined by the board last year**, to ensure that implementation and priorities are consistent with this policy. This policy will affect all students, a club does not reach all students, it should not be left to GSA to **ensure** it is working for all students.

If you “**value attitudes and practices that encourage integrity, respect and trust in all relationships**” and want **understanding** and **ownership** from the start of something new, then you need to include us in the process preferably when the issue is identified.

Our advise?

- Give a heads up on the issues you are addressing,
- We have heard your thoughts that we don't represent all parents. Give us the time to include them in our consultation that we might reach more parents and truly represent this stakeholder.
- Ask
“How was consultation achieved?” instead of “did you consult?”
- Ask
“How was the feedback evaluated and integrated?” instead of “was it useful?”

I learned from a wise teacher many years ago that asking open ended questions, that require a few sentences in response is a far better means of getting useful information than asking questions that can be answered yes or no.

(Speech given by Audrey Smith, Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils President September 26, 2016 General Board of Education SD61 meeting)