

VANCOUVER SECONDARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Staff Committee HANDBOOK

Third Edition



July 2023

Vancouver Teachers' Federation

Staff Committee Language as per the Collective Agreement

A.5.c. Staff Committee

There shall be established in each school, at the beginning of each school year, a Staff Committee. Such Committee shall operate without derogating the duties and authority vested in the Principal/Vice-Principal pursuant to the School Act and School Act Regulations. Labour Relations Code and/or, subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement, the policies of the Board.

1. Composition

- (a) Principal, and/or Vice-Principal
- (b) A maximum of twenty (20) employees selected by the staff, or, at the discretion of the staff, the entire staff.
- (c) The VTF Representative on staff.
- (d) Members of the committee shall reflect the diversity of the staff.
- (e) The Chairperson, who shall be an employee, shall be selected on an annual basis by the employees on the Committee.
- (f) The Secretary, who shall be an employee, shall be selected on an annual basis by the Committee to record the business of the Committee.

2. Function

The Committee shall have the right to provide advice to the Principal/Vice-Principal(s), and to consider the following matters in relation to the operation of the school:

- (a) Employees' assignments, including the following considerations:
 - (i) Adequate physical requirements.
 - (ii) Suitable class size.
 - (iii) Suitable instructional assignment.
 - (iv) An adequate supply of learning materials,
 - (v) An adequate auxiliary staff.
 - (vi) Time to plan, to organize and to work with individual students, with colleagues, and with parents.
 - (vii) Student evaluation (reporting on student progress).
- (b) To assess the teaching and learning conditions within the school and to make recommendations to the Principal for improvement in the total teaching/learning situation.
- (c) To study and make recommendations on school regulations and routines to the Principal.
- (d) To conduct studies on school philosophy.

- (e) To participate in the planning and scheduling of professional and staff development activities.
- (f) To contribute to school curricula planning and evaluation.
- (g) To be involved with the timetabling and organization of the school.
- (h) To consult and be involved in school staffing and to conduct studies of the utilization of staff, including auxiliary staff, and to make recommendations to the Principal.
- (i) To explore any other matters of concern to the members of the school staff.
- (j) In order to assist with the above to establish any or all of the following committees:
 - (i) Interviewing Committee.
 - (ii) Professional Development Committee.
 - (iii) Timetable and Staffing Committee.
 - (iv) Finance Committee.

It is understood that the school administrator(s) is an ex-officio member(s) and may attend any meeting of such committees. It is also agreed that other committees may be established with the agreement of the Principal.

3. Meetings

- (a) Except by mutual agreement, meetings shall be held once a month throughout the school year.
- (b) An agenda shall be established jointly by the Staff Committee Chairperson and the Principal/ Vice-Principal and published at least one (1) day prior to the meeting by the Staff Committee Chairperson.
- (c) Minutes shall be recorded by a member of the Staff Committee and made available to all employees within three (3) days of the meeting.
- (d) If the school administrator(s) does not follow the advice of the Staff Committee, reasons, which shall be recorded in the minutes, shall be provided verbally to the Committee.

9. Teacher Workload (from Restored Language)

A. Timetabling Considerations

1. In timetabling teachers' workloads, consideration shall be given to each load with regard to equalizing the teachers' total assignments considering such factors as:
 - (a) The number of course preparations.
 - (b) The number of subject areas.
 - (c) The number of locations.
 - (d) Other relevant factors.
2. In timetabling teachers' loads, special consideration shall be given to the load of beginning teachers to provide an assignment which is not excessive for the beginning teacher in terms of the number of course preparations, the number of subject areas, the teaching location and the number of students.

How Can I Make a Change in Policy at My School?

PROCESS AT A GLANCE



Step 1

When a teacher has a concern about an issue, encourage them to start with some questions and investigate before bringing it to Staff Committee – they can ask the School Union Team and/or Admin – it may or may not need to be dealt with at Staff Committee.



Step 2

If, after doing some research, the teacher still feels that the matter needs to be addressed at Staff Committee, it is placed on the Staff Committee Agenda with the caveat that the item cannot violate the terms of the Collective Agreement. Ideally it comes in the form of a motion.



Step 3

The Staff Committee discusses the issue and makes a recommendation to the whole staff and brings motions forward to the staff meeting (the teacher is there to present the idea if they are not usually a member of Staff Committee).



Step 4

The whole staff considers and votes on the recommendations.



Step 5

The Administrator accepts and acts on the recommendation or responds to the Staff Committee verbally, which is minuted, if they are unable to act on the recommendation.

FAQs for Staff Committees



STAFF COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

- This information will be in your school constitution. If the Constitution seems like it needs to be updated, it can be amended by your staff to suit your school's needs.
- If your school doesn't have a Staff Committee constitution, the VSTA can provide you with examples from other schools.
- Make sure a staff rep is one of the members.
- Administrators have one vote, not a vote for each of them.
- Since having a Staff Committee is our right established through negotiations between the Employer and the VTF, other bargaining units (e.g. CUPE, IUOE etc.) should not be official members with a vote on the Committee. However, it can be helpful to have them at meetings, especially if they have an issue to bring forward, or an issue you are discussing that involves their work.

TIPS TO HELP THINGS RUN

- Staff Committee is a monthly process. Here's a typical month for the chair of a Staff Committee:
- Plan to have your Staff Committee meeting a week or so before the staff meeting. You could set up a year long schedule for regular meetings. This does not preclude having extraordinary meetings for emergent time sensitive issues.
- Mid-month, send an email to all staff requesting agenda items. When items come in, create the agenda (which likely includes standing agenda items such as Pro-D, WLC/B etc.), and circulate the proposed agenda a few days before the planned meeting. This may generate more items as people are reminded of the upcoming meeting. If appropriate, add the new items and circulate the revised agenda. It is important that all staff know what will be discussed, as items may pertain to them and they may want to come and speak on these issues. **Wherever possible, discussion items should be framed as motions so that the discussion is focussed and it leads to action. This forestalls meandering conversations with no tangible outcomes.**
- It is important to notify people who should be at the meeting if an agenda item will affect them personally/professionally. For example, if an agenda item is about something happening at the library, make sure the teacher librarian is informed about it so they can attend.
- Hold the meeting. Have a recorder take the minutes, and forward them as soon as possible to the Chair for distribution to the whole staff.
- Email the minutes to the whole staff and also prepare to present the motions to the Staff meeting.
- Present any motions passed (or defeated!) at your Staff Committee meeting to the general staff meeting for their consideration and vote. The Staff Committee Chair should facilitate the discussion on these items at the staff meeting.



I DON'T KNOW HOW TO CHAIR A MEETING! HOW DO I DO IT?

- Different schools do things different ways which is fine, however, basic rules of order speed up meetings and keep them consistent.
- Keep a speaker's list, which means maintaining a list during the meeting of who has indicated that they want to speak, by raising their hand, and letting people speak in turn. The objective is to have a variety of voices heard and a sense of fairness about who speaks.
- Some Staff Committees have a discussion about an issue first, and then vote on a motion that captures the idea, and other have motions proposed first, followed by debate, discussion and then voting. The important thing is that if you have arrived at a decision, make sure it is articulated and recorded and voted upon by the members of the committee, so everyone is clear on what the committee is taking forward to the staff meeting.
- The chair should NOT be taking minutes. Ask a member of the committee to be the regular recording secretary.

Some basic Rules of Order

Motion: A motion brings business to a meeting that requires action. A meeting can consider only one subject at a time, so a motion can be made only when no other motion is pending. A motion needs a mover and a seconder, otherwise, it cannot be discussed. Once it is on the floor, it belongs to the meeting, not the mover. People can ask the mover questions for clarification of the intent.

Amendment: A motion to change, to add words to, or to omit words from, an original (main) motion – usually to clarify or improve the wording of the original motion. [There is a long tradition of not allowing amendments that are contrary to the intent of the motion.]

Amendment to the amendment: A motion to change, to add words to, or omit words from, the first amendment. [N.B. There CANNOT be an amendment to the amendment to the amendment!]

Challenge the Chair: Any ruling of the Chair can be challenged, but such appeals must be made immediately after the ruling. If debate has progressed, a challenge is not in order.

Refer: If a motion needs to be discussed more informally or at greater length than is possible in a regular meetings, Robert's Rules allows you to refer the motion (usually to a specific committee or group of people). Both voices for and against the motion must have been heard for this motion to be in order. This typically happens when there are more questions than answers and people are getting bogged down in details – this is a signal that more work needs to be done.

Table: A motion to set aside consideration of the main motion; it has the effect of delaying or preventing action from being taken on the main motion. Rather than passing or defeating a motion, a meeting may choose to put off discussion by tabling. A motion to table is not debatable, so if someone moves to table a motion, the vote to do (or not) takes place immediately.

Postpone: A motion to postpone to a certain time (or postpone indefinitely) allows for limited debate, which must not go into the merits of the main question any more than is necessary to enable the meeting to determine the propriety of the postponement. It may only be amended as to the time of the postponement.

I move that we:

Adopt... (the agenda/the minutes from meeting dated...)

Amend... (agenda/minutes/motion)

Refer...(something to... admin/dept/VSTA reps etc)

Put the question... (ie. vote now/stop debating)

Table the motion... (it disappears; no record of it)

Refer the motion... (to a specified date)

NOTE: Remember to record in the minutes who the mover/seconded was and it was “carried” or “defeated”.

Sample Staff Committee Minutes

Date:	Time:
Chair:	Recording Secretary:
Attending:	
Regrets:	
Agenda Items	
Item #1: <i>notes</i>	
Motion:	
Moved by:	Seconded by:
Carried/defeated	
Item #2: <i>notes</i>	
Motion:	
Moved by:	Seconded by:
Carried/defeated	
Item #3: <i>notes</i>	
Motion:	
Moved by:	Seconded by:
Carried/defeated	

Staff Committee Constitutions

The VSTA has most Staff Committee Constitutions on file if you are thinking about updating yours. The Constitution must be congruent with the language in the Collective Agreement. Furthermore, the Staff Committee cannot pass motions that contravene the language of the Collective Agreement, the School Act, the Human Rights Act etc.

Last thoughts

Discussion in the form of motions makes for productive and well run Staff Committee meetings that people will want to attend. People can speak for or against the motion, or ask clarifying questions – it is not an opportunity to wax prolific.

The Chair has the power to direct the meeting and keep it professional and on task – these are the powers invested in you by Robert’s Rules of Order.

