FINDING AND SUSTAINING QUALITY PARENT LEADERSHIP

Reprinted from BCCPAC IMPACT Newsletter, May 2005

Every organization needs good leadership. Good leaders help the membership set the course for the organization and achieve its goals. At this time of year, or in September, most PACs and DPACs are choosing their executives for the coming school year. BCCPAC, as well as some DPACs, are fielding the question: What happens to our PAC if we can't find a president? Finding and sustaining good leadership is a problem for many organizations. The answer lies in providing potential leaders and members with a good—yes, irresistible—reason to become involved.

With so many competing demands in our lives, parents must see special value in giving time and energy to their PAC or DPAC over and above the other ways they may already contribute to their school or district. The responsibility for attracting quality leadership does not rest solely with the PAC or DPAC. It belongs to the entire school and district community. Parent-involvement researcher Anne Henderson, speaking at BCCPAC's Spring Conference in 2003, said that when schools reach out to families, parents respond and children do better. The message from schools and districts must be: "*Parents belong in our schools. Parents share our power and responsibility to educate our children. By working together as full partners, we will benefit all students*."

This message has huge significance for parent participation and leadership. It provides the irresistible reason many potential parent leaders are looking for to move into a leadership role. As parents, how do we encourage and assist our schools and districts to deliver this crucial message?

Anne Henderson says that families of all income and education levels, and from all ethnic and cultural groups, are supporting their children's learning at home. Parents have a natural interest in ensuring their children succeed. Schools, PACs, and DPACs that focus on building community—that say to parents, "You belong here"—draw parents into schools and boost their confidence to participate beyond the home to ensure their children's success and the success of all students.

The answer to finding and sustaining good leadership lies in providing potential leaders with an irresistible reason to become involved.

Among those parents are potential leaders willing to step into executive, committee, and project positions given the right opportunity. Creating opportunities and a sense of belonging can begin with something as simple as personal reflection: What would bring me into the school or to a PAC or DPAC meeting? What would persuade me to take on a job beyond what I am already doing? Most people like doing what they are good at or interested in, and they are often flattered to be asked. This is an important part of making people feel welcome. An invitation from the principal, a teacher, or PAC representative to do a job one would be naturally suited for is hard to resist.

When looking for leadership positions or when asking current volunteers to stay on, consider these tips:

- Strike a nominating committee to solicit volunteers before election night. A phone call ahead of time is friendlier and less intimidating than 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.

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- Encourage retiring executive to stay on in an advisory capacity.
- Invite prospective volunteers to an executive or committee 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.
- Above all, acknowledge the work of past and current volunteers.

There are many potential parent leaders in our school communities. Once they believe they belong, they will come and they will contribute.

DELEGATE FEEDBACK BCCPAC FALL CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 12-15, 2009

Over 100 BCCPAC members attended our 2009 Fall Conference in November 2009, *Student Success: Common Vision and Collaborative Action*. Held at the Hilton Vancouver in Burnaby, the conference presented a variety of workshops and speakers to members over the four days . This conference was also an opportunity to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Parent Advisory Councils being legislated as part of the School Act. Invited presenters included; Keynote, Gary Anaka, *Student Success Requires a Well– Built Brain*, Dr. Susan Phillips, *The " Win-Win" of Collaboration* , Bill Robinson, *Unleashing the Hero Within* and Luc van Hanuse, *Improving Aboriginal Parent Involvement*.

Here is a sampling of what our members said about their experience at the conference:

"I enjoyed the conference. All the parents I spoke with enjoyed it as well and they were all getting a wealth of information."

"This is one of the most energetic , fascinating and motivating sessions I have ever attended!!"

" Very "inspiring"– we will work on bringing this speaker to our district to talk to staff and parents."

"Useful information practical as PACs and as parents."

"The presentation was very practical and easy to understand and apply."

" Great resources to take back to PAC and family."

" Good job of relating material to actual situations for PAC leadership to use these skills , insightful"

"Very excited about the information. Can't wait to share it with my school"

"Great discussion and learning."

"Very pertinent information as a new Treasurer I am so grateful to have this opportunity!"

"Great info to take home to PAC/School/parents."