

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
IN COLLABORATION WITH DFID AND VSO

PTA GOOD PRACTICE KIT

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Introduction

“It takes a community to raise a child” (African proverb)

The support and involvement of parents and the community are extremely important for education. Parents are the primary influence in their children's lives. They are their very first teachers. When teachers and parents can work together supportively, this raises standards in a school and helps children to achieve their potential. Children whose parents are actively involved with their schooling are more likely to value education and achieve more.

Many schools feel they do not get the support they would like from parents. There are many reasons why this may be so. Some parents feel scared or intimidated by the school and do not feel confident enough to get involved. Often teachers make all the decisions and parents are rarely asked what they think. Throughout this manual are suggestions or ideas that can be used to empower parents to take a leading role in making decisions that affect their children's education. If parents have some power and control over their children's education, they may feel more included and will be more likely to give their support. This support is extremely valuable as it helps a school to meet the students' individual needs. The best way to start is to create opportunities for discussion, asking the parents what they think and taking their views into account.

This booklet is a collection of guidelines and ideas that have been compiled over two years of working with schools and communities in a variety of different settings within Region Six. For this reason, most of the examples in this booklet describe ideas or projects that are happening within Region Six. However, it must be recognised that there are many other examples of good practice happening across Guyana. It is always a good idea for any PTA or community group to share ideas and learn from what others are doing elsewhere. Many of the ideas in this guide have been developed and used by PTAs, and have helped to increase the involvement of parents and the community in the life of the schools.

This booklet is for parents, teachers and anyone else who is interested in strengthening the relationship between the school and the community. You can read it all the way through or just look at particular sections when you need them. The important thing to remember is to try and make parental and community involvement fun and enjoyable. So try any of the ideas in this booklet and feel free to experiment and try some ideas of your own as well.

1.0 Section One: What is a PTA?

A PTA is a Parent Teacher Association, sometimes called a Parent Teacher Family Association (PTFA) or a Community Teacher Association (CTA). In this book the term PTA refers to any of these terms or other names given to the school's main parent body. It is the link between the school and the community it serves, and is vital to the success of the school and its students.

1.1 The Structure of the PTA

In the PTA, some parents and teachers have special roles in the Executive Committee. Some of the duties and activities for these roles are described below.



Participants at a workshop at The New Amsterdam Special Needs School drew pictures to explore the roles in the executive body

It would be useful to ask PTA members to discuss these roles in small groups before an election, so that everybody is clear about them. You could ask them to draw pictures of each role to make the activity more interesting and include those who have poor literacy skills.

1.2 Members of the Executive Committee

President: This role has to be taken by a parent or community member, not a teacher. He/she has the responsibility of facilitating meetings, communicating with parents and teachers, taking a leadership role on projects, and encouraging all the PTA members to share their ideas and actively participate.

Vice President: Must be taken by the Head Teacher. He/She should support the President and take the role of the President in his/her absence.

Treasurer: Should be taken by a parent. The treasurer must keep accurate records of all the money that the PTA spends and receives. These records should be made available for any member of the PTA to read. He/She should also give regular financial reports at the PTA meetings, giving details of the money that has been raised or donated and how it has been spent. It is also important that parents help to decide on how the money is spent.

Secretary: This role can be taken by a parent or a teacher. His/her job is to make notes of all the main points discussed at meetings and share information out to all the PTA members. He/she may also take responsibility for contacting people, writing letters to other organisations and writing personal invitations or newsletters.

Committee Members: There should be five committee members. Three of them should be parents and the two other should be teachers at the school. The role of the Committee Members is to work with the Executive Body by helping them to make decisions and guide and direct the activities of the PTA.

Parent Grade or Level Representative: At CV Nunes Primary School in Anna Regina a representative from each grade attends their monthly executive body meetings. This helps the PTA to discuss the issues and needs of all the students.

1.3 Elections

The Executive Committee should serve either one or two years. This is up to the PTA to decide. At the end of this time the PTA should elect a new Committee.

- Make sure at least 45% of your total PTA members are at the meeting when the elections take place. There must also be at least 5 members of the existing Executive Committee with at least two of them being parents. This is called a Quorum. If these people are not present the elections should be postponed.
- The voting can be done by a show of hands. In some communities there may be a risk of people voting on the basis of personal relationships. If this is the case, it may be a good idea to make the voting secret. This can be done by asking people to close their eyes and lower their heads before raising their hands. Or you could use slips of paper with names written on them and ask for people to put a tick next to the person for whom they are voting.
- If members of the PTA feel that someone in the Executive Body is not fulfilling his/her role, they can at any time, vote to remove that person from his/her position. This will only be successful if the majority of people vote to remove them. They can then elect a new person to fulfil the role for the remaining life of that Executive Committee.

1.4 Constitution

It is a very important for the PTA to develop a constitution. This is a document that sets out the name and the objectives of the PTA and how it is managed. It should also have details of both the general and

the executive meetings. You should refer to the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education (pages 40 to 43) when you develop the constitution. There is also an example of a PTA constitution on page 36.

1.5 Linking with Ministry of Education and other bodies

The PTA can link with the Ministry of Education by inviting an Education Officer or a Welfare Officer to the PTA meeting. You may want to ask them to give talk or to answer questions from parents about the management of education at the school and in the region. Many regions now have Regional, Sub-Regional PTAs or Sub-Regional Organisation of School (SORS). These are made up of a PTA representative from every school in each region or sub-region. The main purpose for these organisations is to link PTAs with the Ministry of Education, help them get their voices heard and their needs met. They are also there to encourage PTAs in different schools to communicate and share ideas. To contact your local SORS you will need to contact your Regional Department of Education and ask for the contact details of the President of the SORS or Regional/Sub-Regional PTA.

1.6. PTA Sub Groups

1.6.1 What are PTA Sub-Groups?

Sub groups are smaller groups that branch off from the PTA. You could either split up into groups during your PTA meeting or set up a club or group to meet separately with a particular focus or theme.

1.6.2 Why Have PTA Sub-Groups?

Smaller groups usually enable people to communicate better and participate more fully. This is because shyer people are more likely to speak in a small group. You can decide exactly what it is you want to do or discuss and are therefore more focused. Every school and community will have different issues that are relevant to them. Having smaller groups at the PTA meeting will enable you to see if there is a particular interest or passion for a subject or issue. You can then find out who is interested in forming a sub group to deal with that subject or issue. You could also use the activity below to find out the ways in which parents, teachers and the community could work together.

Merry Go-Around

Write four different themes or types of involvement on four large separate pieces of paper, for example: School Management, Extra curricular activities, Learning, Community Links. Place each sheet on a table with some pens and plenty of space or chairs around it.

Divide the PTA into four groups then ask a group to sit at each one of the tables. Give them 10 minutes to talk about the theme on their sheet and how they might like to get involved in each area. Ask one person in each group to note down all the ideas. After ten minutes either clap your hands or ring a bell and ask each group to move on to the next table. Continue until each group has discussed and made notes on all four themes, reading and adding to the ideas as they go. What is written on the sheets should give you a good idea of your PTA's passions and interests, and be a good starting point for setting up a sub-group.

Here are some examples of PTA Sub-Groups:

(a) School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC)

The School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) is made up of about six to nine persons, including parents, school staff, students and an Educational Officer. The size of the school will determine the number of persons in the SIAC. All PTAs should have a SIAC so that the school and community can work together to develop and implement a School Improvement Plan (SIP).

(b) Levels or Divisional Grade Meetings

Many schools hold level meetings. Parents meet in smaller groups with teachers according to the level of their child. These meetings are a good place for parents to speak to their children's class teachers about specific issues and what they are learning in class. It is also a better way of getting support from parents for more specific projects.

(c) Welfare Group

A welfare group was set up for interested parents at St Aloysius Primary School to discuss and build knowledge and understanding of issues concerning the welfare of the children at the school. The members meet once a month, sometimes inviting a resource person to help them build their knowledge. They then share their knowledge and encourage other parents to do the same by facilitating a session at the PTA meeting every month. Other Welfare groups are in charge of managing donations for school uniform and equipment.

(d) Parents as Partners

This is a group in Region 9 that provides an opportunity for parents and teachers to communicate, discuss, share ideas, learn new things and socialize with each other in a relaxed and open environment. As a result, parents and teachers have formed relationships that are approachable, supportive, respectful, and have a positive impact on the children's academic and social development. Group discussions and the sharing of information at these sessions not only benefit the children, but also strengthen the relationships between parents and teachers.



Parents look at different games that can help their children learn

2.0 Section Two: What Should a PTA do?

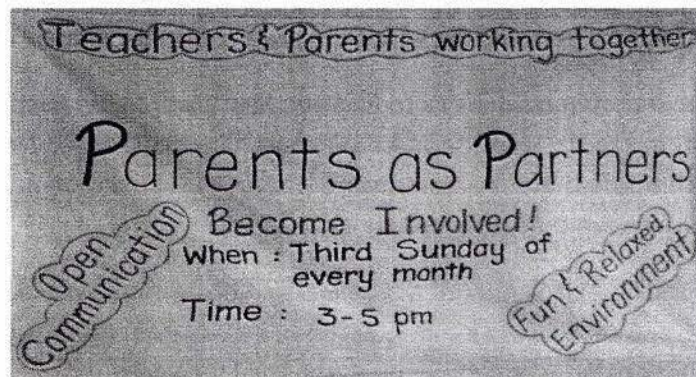
2.1. Communicate

Good communication is an important part of any PTA. Everybody in the community needs to know about the PTA and what it is doing. This can be tricky in more urban settings when parents are more spread out and mixed with other school communities.

Often the reasons why PTAs have poor attendance are because the systems used to notify parents of a meeting are not working as they should. For example, relying on the teachers to ask the students to write a note in their books is not very effective as there are too many possible pitfalls e.g. the teacher or student forgetting, parents' or children's illiteracy.

Here are a few ideas for getting messages out to parents and the community:

Notice Board: Have a board or poster placed in a prominent position outside the school. Use this to notify parents of upcoming meetings and events. It is also a good idea to have another board inside the school on which to display photographs, recognising the PTA's achievements and share other information on PTA events.



This is a poster for a project that was set up for parents and teachers in Region 9.

Personal Invitations: The PTA at Edinburgh Primary School more than doubled its normal attendance by sending out personalised notes on slips of paper. We should never under-estimate the power of the personal touch. Make sure that the language you use in the invitation is friendly, informal and can be understood by the majority of parents or children.

Personal Telephone Calls: The "Fathers' Forum" held at St Pius Primary in Georgetown had an attendance of eighty two (82) fathers as a result of personal telephone calls made to them. The power of the personal touch is shown here in a marked way. "Father's Forum" is funded by UNICEF and implemented by the Georgetown Department of Education.



Fathers in attendance at St Pius Primary

Devise a PTA Telephone Tree: Each person on the tree is responsible for contacting two or three others and so on until everybody has been contacted. This can make use of existing links between people, such as, those who live very close to each other or go to the same church.

Flyers and leaflets: These can be an excellent way of publicising your PTA or events or groups that have been organised by the PTA. Make sure the leaflets are easy to read and attractive by using plenty of images and photographs.

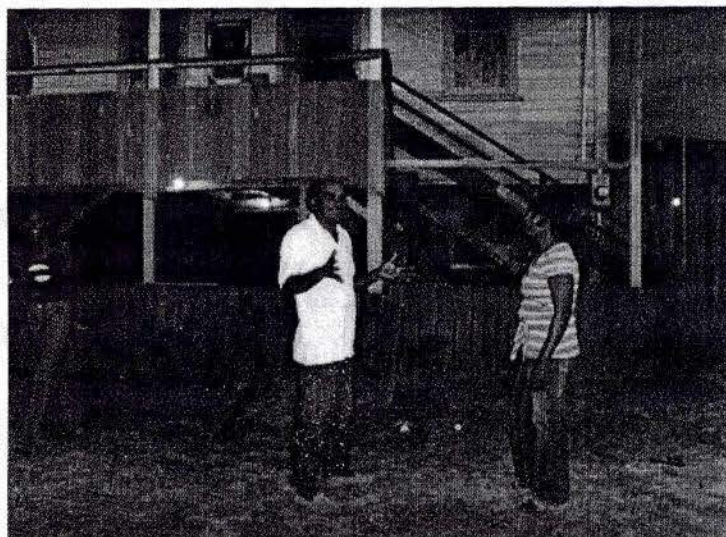
It is a good idea to get thoughts and opinions from parents about the school and the PTA because the more you take their views into account the more supportive parents will be. Parents will have good ideas about many things, for example: school tours and activities, raising and spending of funds. Make sure you listen to their ideas and take them seriously. It is also helpful to find out what skills and talents parents have that may be useful to the PTA. Here are a few ways of doing this:

Questionnaire: You could draft a questionnaire to find out what parents are happy and unhappy with, and what they want from the school and the PTA. You could also ask them to identify their skills and talents. It is important to note that many parents may not be able to read the questionnaire. In these cases, it would be better to read out the questions as an interview.

Home-School Report Books: At The Special Needs School in New Amsterdam, the staff is trying out a new idea to help parents and teachers communicate. In one class each child is given a small book in which the parent or teacher can write comments on the child's schoolwork, homework or behaviour. An effort should be made by teachers and parents to balance any negative comments with praise. If the

parent has difficulty communicating through writing, then a simple code of symbols could be used instead.

Community Visits: PTA members could talk to parents and community members by visiting homes in the community.



This is member of the Yakusari Primary PTA visiting a parent in the community. This parent feels that home visits are the best way to engage with parents who do not attend meetings.

Parents Councils: Setting up a parent council is a great way to help parents get actively involved in making important decisions that affect the school. One way of doing this is having a parent representative from each class to form a parent council. They could attend class or level meetings and then ensure the views of parents feed in to decision making in the school.

2.2 Hold Regular PTA Meetings

There should be at least one PTA meeting every term. The executive body could meet more regularly. For larger schools, it may be better to hold meetings according to grades. For example, parents of grade 1 and 2 meet on one day, 3 and 4 on another day. This will mean that the issues are more relevant and communication is easier. It is a good idea to have other smaller groups meeting regularly as well, each with a different focus e.g. Student Welfare, Arts and Culture etc. See pages 5 and 6 for more about sub-groups.

It is important to make all these meetings fun, enjoyable and beneficial for everyone. The best way to do this is to make sure everybody is actively involved in the meeting as far as possible. Here are some ideas to help you do this:

Prepare the Space

Make sure that you change the space to ensure the parents do not feel like they are a student back at school. You also want to create an environment where everybody feels on an equal level and can

communicate effectively. You don't want some people to be hiding at the back and others to take over the meeting. The ideal seating arrangement is a circle. If your space is not big enough to fit everyone in a single circle you can make a double one i.e. a circle within a circle. Everybody should be part of the circle. Do not separate teachers, Headteachers or the president.



Parents and teachers sit in a circle for a workshop at St Aloysius Primary School.

You will be surprised how much difference it makes by simply changing the seating arrangement. People are more likely to listen and get involved in the meeting, and less likely to start talking to their neighbor, falling asleep or leaving early. There is no need to place tables in front of people as this makes things too crowded and stops people from being able to move around. The circle is the best way to sit for games and icebreakers.

(a) Make an Agenda (and stick to it)

It is important that everybody knows what is on the Agenda for the meeting. This should be decided in advance by the executive body and either written on a board or given out on paper. Some schools even give the agenda to parents in advance. If the meeting is at risk of getting hijacked by people's personal agendas, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to politely steer the meeting back on track.

In some PTA meetings the same issues are brought up again and again and a lot of time is spent discussing issues that concern only a few. If this is the case, it is a good idea to place a time limit on each point of the agenda (particularly "Any Other Business" and if the matter is not resolved, organize a separate meeting for those interested in discussing it further. This helps to prevent the meeting from dragging on which leads to boredom, frustration and people walking out.

(b) Use games and Ice Breakers

Ice Breakers are games and activities that can be used at the start of a meeting or within a session or meeting to:

- Help people to feel more relaxed, open and more confident to speak.
- Encourage the group to interact and get to know each other, making communication easier during the rest of the session.
- Give the group new energy and create a friendly, informal atmosphere.

See page 25 for some examples of games and icebreakers.



Parents and Teachers at Friends Primary play "Shark Attack"

(c) Have Group Discussions

Parents want to be more involved in meetings, but many are too shy to speak in a big group. You can help everyone to be more actively involved by dividing into smaller groups to discuss issues or share skills and opinions. This creates opportunities for parents and teachers to share ideas and makes the meetings much more enjoyable for parents. It will give you lots of ideas and valuable information on whatever you are discussing and help to improve relationships between teachers and parents.

Use a section of your PTA meeting for "group sharing". The issues and ideas raised in these sessions can help the PTA make important decisions such as the management of behaviour or spending of funds. There are some ideas on page 29 that some schools have come up with for topics for group discussion or sharing. You can come up with your own list at your PTA meeting by asking parents what they would like to discuss, learn or share.



Group discussions at Crabwood Creek Primary School

It is vital that the opinions and ideas that you gather from parents and community members are taken seriously and that they are involved in making important decisions. It is not enough just to tell parents about decisions that have already been made. They must be involved in making them. This will help parents to feel more valued, making them more committed and willing to get involved, as they will have an active and valuable role to play.

3.0 Section Three: How can the PTA benefit the school and the community?

The PTA helps to create a link between the home and the school. Parents and Teachers need to feel that being part of the PTA is a good thing for them, so make sure that the PTA benefits everyone and that everyone is aware of how they can benefit from being involved in the PTA.

The PTA is a good thing for **parents** as it can help them to keep up to date and aware of what is going on with their children's education. Being involved in the PTA can be a good way of meeting other parents, sharing concerns, and learning new skills.

PTA involvement also benefits **teachers**, as it is a good opportunity for teachers to reach potential volunteers and helpers who could assist with school projects. **Students** will benefit as a result of their parents being involved in their education. It is likely that they will do better at school and have better behaviour.

So the more parents are involved the better for everyone. The PTA can have many more benefits for parents, teachers and students. The key is variety.

3.1 Provide a variety of PTA Activities in which the community can get involved

The more variety you can have in your PTA, the better it will be, and the more people will get involved. This is because different people will have different interests, skills and personalities. For example, some

people would like a chance to discuss important social issues, but would prefer to do this in a small group. Some people like to organise big projects like fairs or concerts, and some parents really want to know more about what their children are learning at school, and what they can do to help. It is not always possible to meet everybody's needs through a monthly or termly PTA meeting, so it is a good idea to have other things going on as well. Here are a few ideas and examples of PTA groups and activities that could involve parents, teachers and other community members.

After School Clubs: If parents have skills in areas such as drama, arts and crafts or sports, they could run an after school club for the students.

Information meetings: The school could run information meetings to inform parents about education policies or issues about the management of the school.

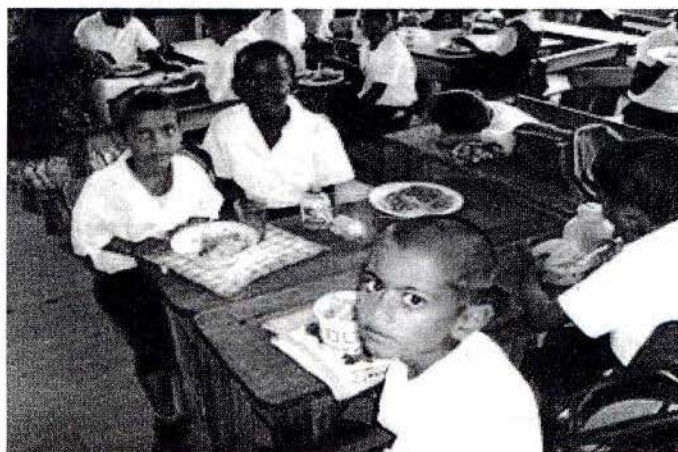
Career Days: The school could have a career day, and ask local businesses and other professionals to come in and speak to parents and students about careers.

Open days/Evenings: Open days are a really good way of encouraging more parents to get involved. It is important to make the school a welcoming place. Give each parent a set time to speak with the teacher about the child's progress. The parent is much more likely to come into school if they are invited on a specific time and date rather than just saying they can come in anytime.

Exhibitions: Display work done by the students. Make a display of photographs of events, activities, and projects undertaken by the PTA.

Prize Giving Ceremonies: These are a great way of recognizing and celebrating the achievements and efforts of students, teachers and parents. At Edinburgh Primary a prize giving ceremony was held. Prizes were awarded to students for academic and non-academic achievements, and parents were given awards for their involvement. This recognition helped to motivate parents to continue or increase their involvement in the school.

Celebration of National and International Events: Use events like Amerindian Heritage month, Indian Arrival Day and Emancipation Day as opportunities to get parents and the community involved.



At Friends Primary School, they celebrated World Food Day by asking parents to cook traditional Guyanese dishes. The food was shared among the students.

3.2 Provide Opportunities for Parents to get involved in the curriculum

Many parents really want to get involved in their children's education but do not have the opportunity. Here are some ideas for activities that can help parents support their children's learning.

Making Teaching Aids and Posters: Teaching aids and posters really help a child to learn and to make the classroom environment more "child friendly". Utilize the creative skills of parents by organizing regular sessions where they can work together with teachers to make posters and teaching aids based on the curriculum.



Parents at Friends Primary work together to make teaching aids

Give hints and tips on helping children at home: Parents want to help their children at home but are unsure of how to do this. You could have a regular slot in your PTA meetings dedicated to giving parents ideas about supporting their children's learning in the home. Teachers and Parents can discuss and share ideas in small groups.

Parents as Volunteers: Some parents may be happy to help out with school trips and tours. Others will have skills and knowledge that they could share with the students in the classroom. Parents would also be valuable in helping to manage the behaviour of students in the classroom or in the playground. If a parent is going to volunteer in the classroom, it is important to take some steps to ensure that this is beneficial and enjoyable for everybody involved.

3.3 Link with other Community Groups

Linking with other organisations and community groups can really benefit the school. Make the most of the links and contacts that PTA members will have. For example, many will be involved with religious

groups and can help to create a link with the local church, mosque or temple. Some members will have links with local businesses and organisations that can come and give talks and presentations at meetings. Officials from the local Health Centre could give talks to parents or students at the school about health issues. You could also invite members of the Police Force to speak about issues relevant to the community, such as, road safety.

In Amerindian villages, there may be a Village Council. They could link with the PTA by attending meetings and working with the school on projects and activities.

Other organisations such as NGOs could give training to a small group of parents e.g. a welfare committee, about issues like child abuse or HIV. The welfare group could then give training to other parents in the community. Some PTA members have made links with NGOs and local churches to set up feeding programmes for the children in the school who are less fortunate.

3.4 Building Relationships

The PTA can help to build relationships between parents, teachers, head teachers and even students. The best way to do this is to provide lots of opportunities for interaction. The games and activities on pages 25 to 28 will help to create a relaxed and fun atmosphere, which is good preparation for some group discussion. This will help to strengthen bonds and develop shared values amongst teachers and parents. Here are some more tips for building relationships.

(a) Mix them up!

For group discussions make sure that the small groups have a mixture of parents and teachers. Also make sure that people do not just group with people they know and with whom they feel comfortable. This can create cliques. Here are a few ways of mixing people up and putting them into groups:

(b) Stay Positive

Anybody who is speaking at the PTA meeting should make an effort to focus on the good things.

Numbering: If you want six groups, go around the room giving everyone a number between one and six. Then ask all the ones to meet in one space, all the twos in another space, etc.

Grouping Game: Play an icebreaker game where people have to get into groups according to star sign, favourite food, number of children, etc. When the groups are evenly spread, ask them to remain in those groups for the next activity.

Get in order: This game is a good ice breaker but it can also be used to group participants with others at a similar level of confidence, avoiding the possibility of the more quiet members being dominated by others. Ask the group to stand in a line with the most confident at one end of the room and the least confident at the other end of the room. Then you can ask them to group with those next to them.

Variations

- Ask group to stand with the tallest at one end and the shortest at the other. Ask group to get in alphabetical order according to their first name.
- Ask group to do any of the above without speaking.

Complaining to parents at the PTA about the lack of attendance at PTA meetings does not help anybody. Instead focus on the positive by giving praise and thanks to those who have attended and encourage them to bring a friend to the next meeting. If you have had an unsuccessful fund-raiser or are having problems with truancy, instead of giving parents a "telling off" ask them to get into groups and talk about some solutions to the problem (you could use the problem tree tool on page 31). If there has been a successful event, make sure you celebrate this and thank everybody who helped to make it a success.

(c) Give Praise and Recognition

Everybody likes their efforts to be noticed and valued. Make a special effort to say thank you publicly to those who have donated time, money or effort to the school. This can be done simply through an announcement at the PTA, or their efforts could be rewarded at a prize giving ceremony. You could make certificates or write a letter of thanks. This means a lot to people who work hard for the PTA, They will feel valued and will want to continue giving their support.

(d) A Welcoming Smile



The Head Teacher at Siparuta Primary has a friendly chat with parents and teachers at a workshop

We should not under estimate the power of our facial expressions and body language. If you want parents to get more involved in the school then they must feel welcome. If parents are met with sour or bored faces they will not feel welcome and may be reluctant to come again. Although teachers may be tired they should still be encouraged to make an effort to be friendly to parents.

(e) Celebrate Differences and Culture

Use the PTA to overcome prejudices and celebrate different cultures and religions. This could be done by asking members to talk about their cultural background, religion, customs and traditions, and

celebrate special days. People could bring in samples of food that they have cooked or explain specific ceremonies or rituals.

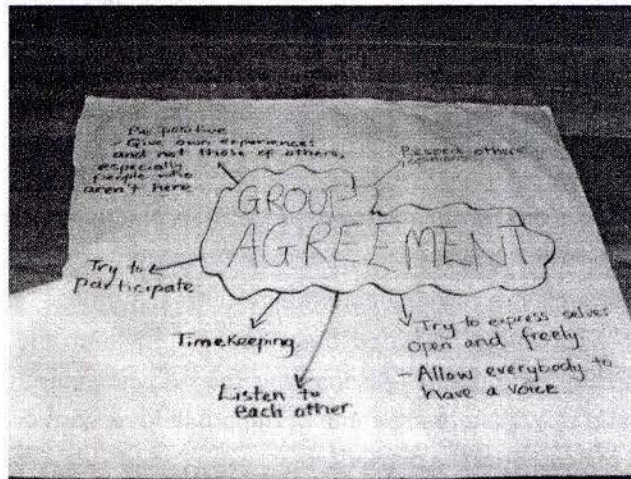
3.5 Managing Conflict

Conflict is normal and healthy. If it is dealt with properly, it can even help to improve relationships in the PTA. When discussing issues at PTA meetings, there are often disagreements. However, they must be managed in a way that does not cause people to feel upset or uncomfortable. Here are some tips for managing conflict.

(a) Make a "Group Agreement"

This is a set of rules or guidelines made by all PTA members for all PTA members. Parents are more likely to respect rules if they are involved in making them. The best way to make a Group Agreement is by writing the title "Group Agreement" on a large piece of flipchart paper and pinning it up on the wall at a PTA meeting. Then ask the question: "What do we need to agree upon in order that we have a good PTA meeting and help everybody to feel valued, comfortable and able to express themselves?"

Encourage the PTA members to suggest rules such as: "Listen to the speaker". Make sure everybody agrees on all of the rules. Encourage the group to talk about the rules to make sure everyone understands and agrees. For example, talk about what is meant by words like "respect". Write all the rules that have been agreed upon onto the paper. When The Group Agreement is finished you can keep it or type it up and display it. Return to it whenever you need to remind everybody of the rules that they made.



This group agreement was created by participants of a PTA workshop in Orealla

(b) Keep individual problems or grievances out of the PTA meeting

The PTA meeting is not the right place to air grievances or problems between teachers and parents. You do not need to involve everybody in a disagreement that concerns only a few people. Doing this can cause embarrassment, be harmful to relationships and make many parents stay away from meetings.

If somebody has a complaint they should be encouraged to go through a **complaints procedure** where the head teacher and all those involved work towards an understanding or agreement. The PTA meeting could be used as a way of informing all the parents of the complaints procedure and explaining how it works.

(c) Have a clear Complaints/Grievances Procedure

It is extremely important that the school has a procedure for managing complaints and grievances. Parents need to have a way to get their voices heard. If they are not aware of a complaint procedure or it is not effective they are more likely to air their grievances at the PTA meeting, causing conflict, negative feeling and creating an “us and them” relationship between the school and its community. If the school manages complaints well, it will also prevent people gossiping and damaging the school’s reputation in the community. A complaints procedure should always try to resolve problems internally using mediation by a neutral person between those involved. See pages 32, 33 for some guidelines on creating a complaint or grievance procedure.

(d) Resolve Conflicts

To try and resolve a conflict the people involved must be willing to talk and listen to each other to try and find a solution. A mediator / neutral person will need to invite those involved to a meeting, and allow each to express the problem from their point of view, uninterrupted. The mediator should then help them to find some common interests and goals. Finally each party needs to identify what they and others can do to deal with the problem, from this they may be able to agree on some steps towards a solution. Some compromise on both sides will probably be necessary. Please see pages 17, 18 for help with resolving conflicts.

3.6 Reaching out to Excluded Parents

Every school has parents who are rarely or never seen at PTA meetings or simply don’t come in to the school. The best people to help reach those parents are the parents and community members who do attend meetings. Some schools are forming community outreach groups, so parents and teachers can visit parents’ homes to offer support. When deciding how to help and encourage parents to get involved, we must first think about the reasons why they do not come to the school and try and understand why they feel this way. Here are some of the possible reasons and some solutions that some schools have developed to overcome these barriers.

Why some Parents don’t get involved with the school or PTA?	What can parents and teachers do to encourage them to get more involved?
They may have had bad experiences at school when they were children or they never went to school and feel ashamed, scared and inferior.	• Make a real effort to welcome them into the school by being warm and friendly. • Try and make sure they do not feel like they are back at school in the PTA meeting by changing the seating. • Ask a friend in the community to accompany them.

They may have some unresolved conflict with teachers or other parents at the school.	• Make sure any conflicts relating to the school are resolved. Ask someone who is not involved in the conflict to mediate.
They may not feel they have the appropriate clothes or can speak "proper English".	• Talk about a dress code that discourages inappropriate dress but allows for work and casual clothes. It is much more important to have people present at the meeting than wearing their Sunday best. • Talk about speech and allowing people to express themselves in their own way. Ask people to try and speak in a way that they can be understood by everybody.
They may have to work during the afternoons or they have other children to look after.	• Try to vary the time of meetings or organize for smaller, sub group meetings to be at times to suit the participants. • Consider providing some child care at meetings by asking a volunteer to supervise the children.
They may fear they will be asked for money or made to feel bad about not coming to meetings.	• Avoid asking parents for money at PTA meetings. Instead ask participants to think of fund raising ideas. • Always try and stay positive at meetings. Do not make people feel guilty. This will only prevent them from coming in the future.
They might not be able to read or write well so cannot sign the registration form, and are too ashamed to ask for help.	• Make a PTA register so that names can just be ticked off. • Ask a group of teachers to make a note of the attendance.
Very few men attend meetings because they are busy working or do not see it as their role.	• Organise special events and activities to get men involved. Make sure they are held at a time when most men can attend. • Hold a fathers PTA meeting. Invite fathers and other male family members to attend.



A Group of Fathers at a Seminar held at Water Chris, Georgetown, for Fathers of Six Schools in Region 4, also funded by UNICEF.

3.7 Use Parents as a Resource

Parents have a lot to offer. They have many skills and talents that could benefit the school, students, parents and teachers. It is important to make use of this as it not only helps to improve the school but also helps parents to feel valued and respected. Conduct a skills audit with the parents and community members. Find out what are their skills, talents, interests, and if they have any useful contacts. When doing this make sure you look out for a wide range of skills, provide examples of different skill areas so

that parents understand the type of thing you are looking for. Then you can talk to parents and decide how their skills would be put to good use.

(a) At the PTA

Parents could use their skills and knowledge to give talks and presentations at PTAs meetings. They may also have contacts with other professionals or experts who could come to the meeting and share their knowledge.



A member of the St Aloysius Welfare Group shares some information with other parents.

Some parents are reluctant to take the lead at PTAs because they fear that others may resent them for appearing superior or boastful. Encourage parents to play the role of facilitator rather than expert, asking people to discuss questions, and share ideas about the subject instead of lecturing to them.

(b) In the classroom

Parents can share their knowledge and skills with students in the classroom. This could happen at a set time each week or if the Class teacher is absent.. Parents could teach children practical skills such as cooking, farming, and needlework.

Parents could also assist the teacher in the classroom by helping individual children who are struggling or helping the teacher to manage behaviour. This would require a good relationship between the parent and teacher, and a clear understanding of the role of the parent in the classroom. See pages 23 and 24 on how parents could help manage behaviour of pupils in a positive way.

(c) For Extra Curricular Activities

Parents could help with extra curricular activities such as school trips and tours. Parents could come and supervise the students during break time. They could organize games and activities and help to resolve conflicts. Parents with skills in sports or Arts and Crafts could run after school clubs for the students.

First, there would need to be a meeting between parents and the teachers who are involved to make sure everyone knows the rules, and what is his/her personal role.

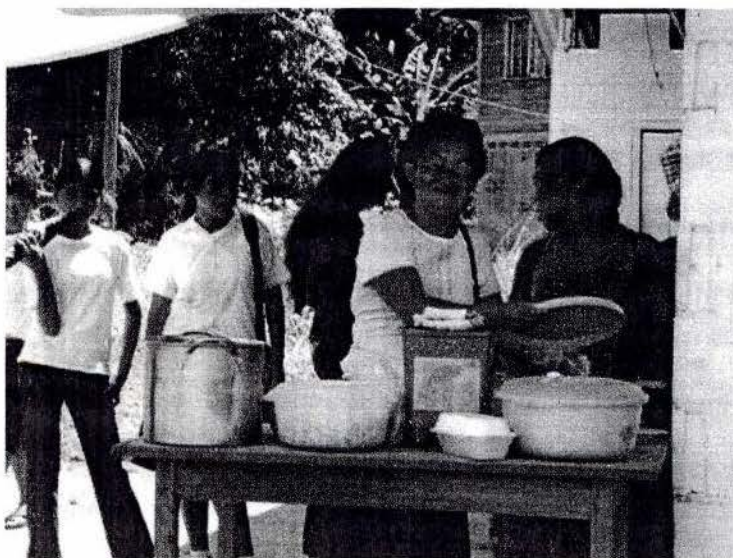


Above: Parents at Yakusari Primary run a sewing class with students

(e) To Raise Funds for the School

The best way for the PTA to raise funds is by organising events and activities in which everyone can get involved. Asking parents for donations at the PTA meeting can make some parents stay away. There are many other ways of raising funds for the PTA. The best are ideas that are fun and help to build relationships between teachers, parents, students and the community. There are a few ideas on page 33 that will get you thinking.

Alternatively you may want to ask local organizations or businesses for some donation. Often they will prefer to give items rather than money. It is important to be specific about what you need and how it will benefit the school and the students. It might also be a good idea to say that you will make a sign or a plaque thanking the company for their donation that will give them some free advertising.



The PTA of Orealla Primary School raised funds by selling food at a local Heritage celebration

3.8 Some Tips and Rules on Managing Money

The issue of money can be the cause of a lot of problems and arguments in the PTA. Therefore, it is very important that anything to do with money is dealt with in a clear, visible and transparent way, and that you stick to certain rules that will prevent any accusations.

- The PTA must manage all of the money raised or donated for the school. The best place to keep the money is in a bank account set up especially for the PTA. Money can only be withdrawn on the signatures of the Treasurer, the Vice President and one other member of the Executive Committee.
- All PTA members should be consulted on a regular basis about how money is raised and spent. The Executive Committee should take all the ideas and suggestions into account when making any decisions about money. Parents will be more interested in helping raise money if they have a say in how it is spent. The treasurer should report on the PTA funds in accordance with the rules governing the PTA.
- If money is raised for an agreed and specific reason, then it must be spent on that given project/item. Parents will be angry and will not want to help raise funds again if money is raised for one thing, and then is spent on something else.
- The Treasurer may keep up to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in cash and use this for any emergency at the school, as is stated in the MOE's regulations. See Appendix 3. This must be recorded and all receipts kept.
- PTA members can only receive payment from the PTA on special occasions, if agreed by PTA members. They cannot get paid for performing their normal role.
- The PTA has the first opportunity to manage or rent the school canteen and use this as a way of raising funds.

4.0 Section Four: Some Helpful Guides

4.1 Getting Started: A Step-by-Step Guide to starting your own project

Step One: Identify the problem, issue or area of interest.

This could be done at the PTA meeting. You could use some of the tools described in "Tools for shared leadership and decision making" on page 30.

Step Two: Getting interested parties together

You could suggest the idea for a project at the PTA meeting and ask those interested to stay behind or leave their contact details. Then arrange a time and place for a meeting and make sure all those interested are informed.

Step Three: Decide on the Aims and Objectives of the group.

The group must decide what it is trying to achieve. This could be done by first asking each person to think about what they would like to gain from the group. This could then be shared and discussed so that the group can identify the aims that are common to everyone! An example of a group aim may be: "To improve the welfare of the children in the school". **Remember to make sure that your aim is realistic and achievable.** Then decide on the objectives i.e. how are you going to achieve your aim? An example of an objective may be; "Through working together with teachers, parents and students to discuss and build knowledge of welfare issues."

Step Four: Plan Programme

You will need to plan ahead. Decide where and how often you will meet, and at what time. Look at your aims and objectives and discuss the activities you would like the group to do. Then put together a plan. It is up to the group to decide how far ahead you will plan for. It could be for the next six months or up to a year.

Step Five: What is needed?

Look at your plan and decide what resources are needed. How will you get them? Decide who will be responsible for each task and when they will need to complete their task.

Step Six: Carry out your project

Make sure everyone is informed of any changes to the plan and let everyone be aware if a member cannot complete his/her activity in accordance with the plan. Try and stick to your plan as much as possible.

Step Seven: Review and Evaluate

When the planned part of the project has finished, you need to decide whether or not you have met your aims and objectives. Discuss what people thought was good and what needs to be changed. Then you can either change or stick to the same aims and objectives.

4.2. A step by Step Guide to Parents as Volunteers in the Classroom

Step One: Find parents who are interested in volunteering in the classroom. This could be done through an announcement at the PTA meeting. Arrange a meeting between the parent, the class teacher and the head teacher.

Step Two: At the meeting decide on the role of the parent in the classroom and what tasks and activities they will conduct; e.g. helping to manage behaviour (see below), one to one support with students, teaching a specific subject area, helping children with learning difficulties. It is very important that all parties agree with what is decided.

Step Three: Draw up a contract or agreement detailing the expectations that both teacher and parent have of one another. Below is an example of what this contract might look like.

Expectations of Parent	Expectations of Teacher
To arrive at agreed time	Communicate regularly with parent about the needs of the students and how parent can best support them.
To discuss and try to resolve any problems with teacher before speaking with HM.	To discuss and try to resolve any problems with parent before speaking with HM or with the Department of Education/MOE.
To support the teacher and all students who need support.	To support parent by giving advice and guidance as needed.

4.2.1 The “Restorative Chat”

One way that parents can be very helpful in the classroom is by helping to manage behaviour in a positive way. When a student does something wrong, there is an opportunity to teach the child the right thing. This is a technique that helps the student to think about how their behaviour affects themselves and others.

When a child has misbehaved or broken a rule, take them to one side away from the other students. Follow the “restorative chat” script below and ask each of the questions in order. Make sure you use the prompts (e.g. who else) to get all the information you need. It is important to keep your voice calm and do not judge or accuse. This will allow the student to be open and honest.

- **What happened?**
- **What were you thinking at the time?**
- **Who has been affected by your actions? Who else?**
- **How have they been affected?**
- **What can you do to put this right?** Ensure that the student finds a way to make things right e.g. saying sorry

4.2.2 Suggested Meeting Structure

Welcome: This needs to be genuine and real to show parents they are truly welcome in the school and their presence is valued and appreciated.

Prayer, pledge

Ice breaker: This will help create a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, encouraging open and positive communication. (See page 25 for ideas.)

Ground Rules/Group Agreement: Parents and teachers are asked to agree on rules and behaviour that need to be adopted to ensure everybody feels comfortable and the meeting is productive. This can be

done with the group at the start of the term, reviewed regularly, and summarised at the start of a meeting

Agenda: This should be written on a board or preferably given to parents and teachers in advance.

Summary of minutes from previous meeting: This Should not be too formal and time consuming. It just needs to cover what was discussed and the outcome or action that was agreed.

Discussion of minutes: Keep this simple by asking, "Does anyone have any questions or anything to add?" The most important issue here is to check whether action points noted at the previous meeting have been dealt with.

Financial Report: The treasurer updates members on the latest incomings and outgoings from the PTAs account e.g. what money has been raised/donated, and spent. This should be made available to everyone to look at or ask questions.

School Information: The Headteacher can update parents on any up and coming activities both within the school curriculum and extra curricular e.g. tours or fairs. This is also a good opportunity to recognise and praise those parents or teachers who have volunteered or made valuable contributions towards the school or PTA.

Teachers Tips: This spot could be used for a different teacher each time to give parents information and advice about what their children are being taught in the classroom (behaviour/curriculum) and what parents can do at home to support this.

Group Session: Members could be asked to form small groups and discuss a particular issue/question. This could relate to the spending of PTA funds. (Participants could discuss various options and try and come to a group decision). It could relate to other issues such as health and nutrition or be used to improve parents' awareness of the curriculum. If you have a resource person they could give a talk.

Feedback: A representative from each group feeds back on the group's ideas.

Positive Ending: This is very important as the feeling among members at the end of the PTA meeting often dictates whether they will continue to attend or invite others.

4.2.3 Ice –breakers

Go Around: Can be used when the whole group is seated in a circle. Participants take it in turns to say one word or sentence to introduce themselves or describe: How they feel, what they have learned, what they are hoping to achieve. This is good at the beginning or end of a session.

Introduce partner to the group: This is useful if the participants are quite shy as it is easier to speak about someone other than you. Ask the group members to turn to the person next to them and find out their name and one other piece of information. Then go around the circle taking it in turns to introduce their partner to the group.

The Sun Shines on You: This is a fun game to play with a larger group (10 or more). It creates a fun atmosphere and you can use it to mix people up for a small group activity so that they end up with people they don't know very well.



Above: Participant at a PTA workshop in Crabwood Creek Play The Sun Shines On You

Stand in the centre of the circle. Ensure each person has one seat or that there are only two people on each bench. Say "the sun shines on you" Followed by a fact, for example "....if you are a parent". Then all parents have to change places with someone across the circle. You then have to find a seat in the circle so that another person will be left in the middle. They repeat the phrase "The sun shines on you if....." followed by another fact. Repeat until everyone is mixed up and you can divide the circle into groups for another activity.

Bicycle Chain: This is a great way of breaking the ice in a big group. Everyone will have spoken to everyone else in a short space of time.



Teachers and parents role play the Bicycle Chain icebreaker at a workshop in Siparuta.

Ask all to find a partner and decide who is A and who is B. Ask the As to form a circle. Then ask the Bs to stand behind their partners so that you have a circle within a circle. Instruct the group that when you clap your hands (or ring a bell if you have one) the As must turn to face their partners and introduce themselves to each other. You can suggest that they share some information or compliment each other. Explain that after a couple of minutes you will ring the bell again and all the As will move one person to their right and have a few minutes to talk to their new partner. Keep going until the As have moved all around the circle and are back with their original partner.

Sing Song: Singing folk songs that everybody knows is a great way to create some positive energy, especially if the songs have actions.



Parents and teachers sing "Rock Dem Bones" at a workshop in Sisters.

Rubber Chicken: This is a good exercise for waking up the body when people are feeling sleepy (for example, after lunch). All stand in a circle and together shake you right hand 8 times counting loudly together from one to eight. Repeat this with your left hand, then your right foot then your left foot, counting together all the time. Go back to the right hand, shake it for the count of eight, then the left hand and so on. The count jumps down from 8, 4, 2 and then 1. On completion the group jump into the air and yell- "rubber chicken!"

Human Knot: Organise participants into groups of around 10 (must be an even number in each group) and stand in a circle. Then ask everyone to put up their right hand and hold hands with someone across the circle. Then do the same with their left hand. They will now be in a knot and they have to untie themselves without letting go of each other's hands. You could ask them to try this without speaking. It can be interesting to have a discussion afterwards about leadership. Ask the questions: Did someone take the role of leader? How did this work?



Teachers play the human knot during a workshop at Tain Primary School

4.3. Participatory Activities

The following activities encourage active participation and communication from groups. They are designed to involve people of all abilities and levels of confidence.

Where Do You Stand: This is a useful way of finding out peoples' opinions or exploring an issue. Ask the group to imagine a straight line across the room. At one end of the line is the word "Disagree" and at the other "Agree". Say a statement and ask people to stand on the line according to their opinion.

Variations:

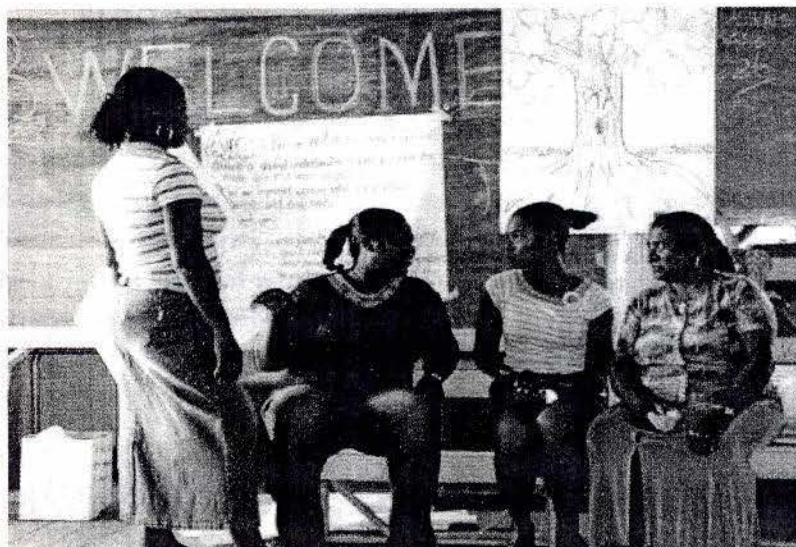
- You could use this at the start and end of a session to see if people's opinions have changed.
- You could use different labels at each end of the line e.g. right and wrong, safe and unsafe

Buzz Groups: This simple exercise is good for keeping people active and involved. Give participants a few minutes to discuss the subject at hand in groups of 2-3.

Merry- Go- Around: This could be used to explore any issue or answer different parts of a question e.g. what can be done to prevent alcohol abuse: at school, in the home, in the community?

4.3.1 Drama: This is a really useful way to explore an issue and get everybody involved.

Hot Seating: Have the group decide on a character or describe one yourself e.g. a parent who does not like coming to PTA meetings, a child who does not attend school.



Parents perform a skit to show how relationships between parents and teachers can be difficult

Then either as one large group or in smaller groups let everyone talk to them and ask questions. They must answer the questions staying in character the whole time. At the end, discuss what happened, what was learned and how it felt. **Forum Theatre:** Ask small groups to act out a particular situation e.g. a quarrel between a teacher and parent. The skit is then performed to the other participants twice. The second time the audience members can shout freeze at any moment, then give advice to the actors or even come and take their place to try and resolve the situation or change the outcome. This should always be followed by discussion and a chance for the actors to come out of their character.

Topics for Discussion: As mentioned previously, the PTA meetings should include some small group discussions so that all participants are actively involved and can help make decisions and share ideas.

Some ideas of topics for discussion:

- Health and Nutrition: Ideas for healthy snacks and meals
- Behaviour: How to encourage children to behave well
- Fund raising: How to raise funds for the PTA/ Fund Spending: How should PTA funds be used
- Road safety: What can be done to make roads safer for our children
- Drugs and Alcohol: What can we do to prevent our children from drug/alcohol abuse

4.4. Tools for Shared Leadership and Decision-making

4.4.1 Small Group Discussion

Many people find it hard to speak up in a large group and prefer to share their ideas in a smaller group. This is a useful and effective way of getting everyone involved in discussing a given subject.

Step One: Grouping

Ask people to get into small groups. See page 15 for ideas on how to do this.

Stage Two: The Question or Issue

Make sure that the groups are given a clear and focused question or issue to discuss. You can use a case study or a story relating to the issue. It would help if this were written on a board or piece of paper. Each group could have the same question or issue or you could give each group a slightly different aspect of the area you are exploring. For example if you are using a story then each group could discuss a different characters actions or point of view. If you are asking a question such as " how can we help children to be healthier?" the groups could focus on these different areas: healthy diet, emotional wellbeing, personal hygiene, and physical exercise.

Stage Three: The discussion

Give the groups enough time to explore their issue (10-20 minutes is usually enough). Make sure that someone in the group is able to make a note of all the ideas and points raised. You could ask teachers to share themselves equally among the groups and for one to take the role of scribe.

Stage Four: Feedback

At the end of the discussion, ask each group to share something that they talked about with the other groups. You can limit this to one point per group depending on time. If appropriate, you could collect the notes made by each group and ask a volunteer (perhaps the secretary) to write up all the ideas and make copies for everyone.

4.4.2 Ranking

This is a useful way of helping a group decide on what is most important to them. It doesn't matter if the groups do not agree on everything because the activity will stimulate some important discussions. This could be used to get feedback from the group about the spending of funds.

Stage One: Grouping

Stage Two: Present cards or objects for ranking

You could give each group a set of cards with either pictures or words on them. Or you can give the groups blank cards and ask them to write their own pictures or words on a given question e.g. what are the most important values to pass onto our children?

Stage Three: Ranking

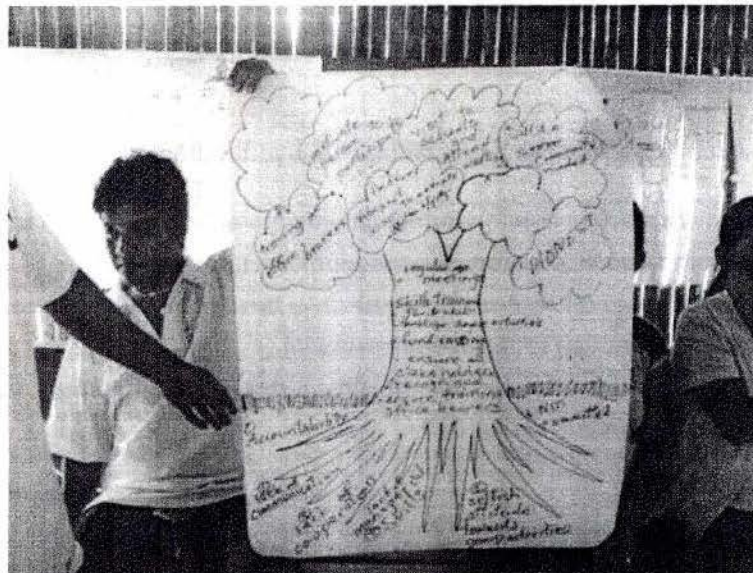
The group then has to rank them in order of importance from first choice to last choice. If there are disagreements the groups can be encouraged to find a way of reaching an agreement.

Stage Four: Feedback

Each group can take it in turns to share their lists, why they made the decisions they did, and how they dealt with disagreements.

4.4.3 Problem Tree

This is a useful way of helping a group to decide on the causes and effects of a problem and to come up with solutions.



Here is a problem tree created by participants at a workshop in Orealla

Stage One: Drawing the tree

Give each group two large pieces of paper and some pens. Ask them to draw a big tree with lots of space for roots and branches. The problem that they are focusing on should be written on the trunk.

Stage Two: Exploring the causes

The groups then discuss the possible causes of the problem and write them on the roots of the tree. To discover deeper root causes encourage them to keep asking, "what causes that?"

Stage Three: Exploring the effects

Ask the groups to think about the effect of each of the causes and to write them in the branches of the tree. They can show links between effects by linking branches together.

Stage Four: Make a new "Opportunity Tree"

On the second piece of paper ask the groups to draw another tree. On this new tree they change each cause and effect into an objective that will solve the issue. For example "unhealthy diet" could become "find ways of improving diet" or "lack of knowledge about healthy diet" could become "educate parents and children on health and nutrition"

Stage Five: Turn the objectives into actions

***The same exercise can be simplified by using one tree to explore problems and root causes in the roots and solutions in the branches**

Either in small groups or as one whole group, decide which objectives can be turned into realistic and achievable actions. These can form the basis of a new project for the PTA or a specific course of action.

4.4.4 Dealing with Complaints

Here are some useful tips for dealing with complaints in your school.

- If you deal with smaller more informal complaints effectively in the school they are much less likely to develop into larger more serious problems later on.
- The first person to receive a complaint is often the class teacher or head teacher. Very often a simple apology is enough to resolve the problem.
- If the person complaining is still not satisfied, then they should go through the school's complaints procedure.

4.4.5 Creating a Complaints Procedure

The schools complaints procedure should be:

- Publicised and Accessible: It should be given to all new parents and explained regularly during PTA meetings.
- It should be simple and easy for parents and teachers to understand and use.
- It should respect confidentiality i.e. only those involved should have access to the details of the complaint.
- It should always encourage informal and quick resolution (include time limits).

There needs to be a nominated person in the school to deal with complaints. This may be the Head Teacher. If he/she is the subject of the complaint, then the Deputy should deal with it. When they receive a complaint, they should follow these steps:

Investigate: This could be done by simply having a chat or making a telephone call.

- What Happened?

Stage Three: Ranking

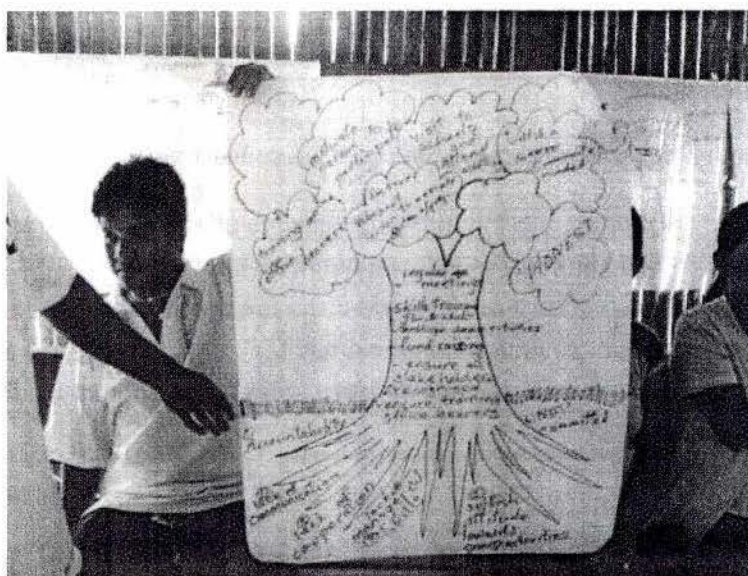
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Investigate: This could be done by simply having a chat or making a telephone call.

- What Happened?

- Who was involved?
- What is unresolved?
- What is needed to put things right?

Resolve: Sometimes it may just be enough that the school acknowledges that the complaint is valid. The following may also help:

- An apology
- An explanation
- Assurance that it will not happen again. (It is important to take action to ensure this.)

Record: Keep a book especially for recording complaints and make sure the following is included in the report:

- Any areas of misunderstanding
- Areas of agreement
- Actions that will result from the complaint, including a time limit.

4.5 Fund raising ideas

Sales

Lots of schools use different kinds of sales to raise funds. Some ask parents to bake cakes or make other food items and bring them to the sale to sell to other parents and members of the community. Some schools have "bring and buy" or jumble sales. It is important to advertise these events well so that lots of people come and buy.

Auction of Promises

You could ask members of the PTA to volunteer specific services like gardening, cooking or even fun activities like art lessons or a boat ride. They must promise to give the service to the highest bidder. Then hold an auction where people can bid for these "promises".

Social Events

Some schools hold barbeques, picnics, or fairs where they raise money by selling food and organising activities and competitions like a fashion show or a raffle. These can encourage families to spend quality time together and to socialize with teachers.



Parents, teachers and students of Siparuta Primary School get ready to go for a picnic

Make a Cook Book

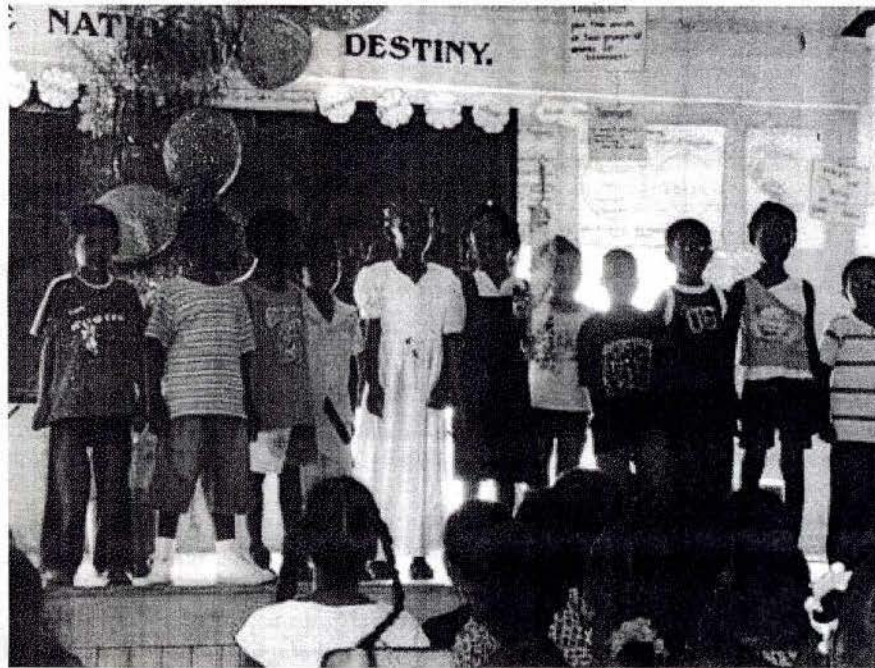
Many parents are very talented cooks. PTA members could bring together their favourite recipes and make a cookbook. Somebody with artistic skills could illustrate the book with drawings. The book could be sold at community events to raise money for the PTA.

Make a blanket

This is a good idea for getting the children involved. Each child could sew a pattern or image related to a particular theme onto a small piece of scrap material. All the pieces could then be stitched together to make a blanket which could then be sold, perhaps to a company who could display it. Parents who have skills in needlework could help the children with this project.

Put on a Play or Concert

This is a great opportunity for parents, teachers and children to show off their skills in singing, dancing, acting or directing. Parents may volunteer to direct the children in a skit or to put one on themselves. Make sure the event itself is well publicised. You could charge a small fee for tickets and also sell refreshments on the day.



Children performing at Edinburgh Primary's Christmas Concert

A School Garden/Mini-Farm

The school could use some of its land to grow flowers or vegetables. This would not only help to teach children about gardening and farming techniques, it could also raise money for the PTA through the sale of vegetables and cuttings. Parents with skills in agriculture could help students with this project.

Link with other community events

Link up with community events and celebrations such as Mashramani, Heritage, Emancipation or the Town Days. Organise a PTA stall where you could sell refreshments or even hold competitions such as "guess how many sweets in the jar" (the closest guess wins the whole jar).

Appendices

Appendix 1

St Joseph High School Parent Teachers Association

Constitution

- I. **NAME:** St Joseph's High School Parent Teacher Association.
- II. **MISSION:** To support the education of children of the school, promote cooperation and establish closer relationships among the staff, parents and community by bringing together the collective insights and resources of stakeholders for the benefit of all students.
- III. **MEMBERSHIP:**
 1. All parents and guardians of children attending the school shall be members of the PTA.
 2. Membership shall be open to those members of the community who feel they can make a contribution to the welfare of the school and its members.
 3. The general membership shall be the supreme decision making body of the PTA.
- IV. **SUBSCRIPTION:**
 4. An annual subscription fee shall be paid by all members of the PTA.
 5. The value of the subscription fee shall be determined annually by the Executive of the PTA..
 6. Subscription fees shall be due and payable at the beginning of the new school year.
- V. **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**
 7. The Executive Committee shall consist of fifteen members.
 8. Eleven members shall come from the general membership of parents and/or interested community members and shall be elected by those parents present at the annual general meeting.
 9. Four members shall come from the teaching staff of the school and shall be elected by the members of the school staff.
- VI. **ELECTIONS**
 10. All members present at the Annual General Meeting have the right to elect office bearers and to vote at the time of elections.
 11. Elections shall be held annually within two months of the beginning of the new school year.
 12. Members may nominate anyone within the organisation to be office bearers.
 13. All members of the Executive Committee are eligible for re-election.
 14. Voting for office bearers may be done by show of hands or by ballot if members so desire.
 15. A Returning Officer shall be appointed for the purposes of the election.
 16. The Returning Officer may be a member of the Association, but not anyone from among those nominated to hold office, or an independent person.
 17. If for any reason an elected member is unable to perform his/her duties, he/she may tender a written resignation so that the position may be declared vacant.
 18. The posts to be contested at each election are President, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer and six committee members.
 19. The Vice President shall be the Head of the school and this position shall not be contested.
- VII. **MEETINGS**
 20. The annual general meeting shall be held within two months of the beginning of the new school year to receive the reports of the Committee (Presidential and Financial reports), to elect office bearers and to transact any other business as may be necessary.
 21. General meetings shall be held at least once in every term.
 22. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once every month.

23. Special general meetings may be called at any time by the Executive Committee, at the request of at least twenty members or at the request of the Head of the School.

VIII QUORUM

24. Seven members shall constitute a quorum for executive committee meetings.
25. At any general meeting twenty members shall constitute a quorum.

IX EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND AUTHORITY

26. Generally the functions of the executive shall be to:
- (a) Guide and direct the affairs of the Association.
 - (b) Represent the interest of the Association to other agencies.
 - (c) Raise and allocate funds of the Association for specific purposes.
 - (d) Appoint sub-committees that in turn may co-opt members for such purposes as may be necessary from time to time.
27. Members who have been elected to the executive are vested with the authority to act collectively on behalf of the PTA.
28. The Executive may appoint anyone who is a member of the Association to fill any vacant position that may arise.
29. Specifically, the role and responsibilities of the executive positions are as follow:

President:

- (a) Head and representative of the Association.
- (b) Gives general direction to all other members of the Executive Committee with respect to their functions.
- (c) Presides at all General and Executive Committee meetings of the Association.
- (d) May appoint or designate any other member of the Executive Committee to deputise in his/her stead as may be necessary.
- (e) Ensures the Association sets and adheres to its policies.
- (f) The President shall have a casting vote.

Vice President

- (a) Assists the President in the execution of his/her duties.
- (b) Performs all the functions of the President in his/her absence.

Secretary

- (a) Prepares and maintains all the records of the Association.
- (b) Prepares the minutes of all General and Executive Committee meetings.
- (c) Handle all correspondences.
- (d) Receives all monies on behalf of the Association and hands over the same to the Treasurer.

Treasurer

- (a) Responsible for all financial matters of the Association.
 - (b) Prepares and maintains financial records.
 - (c) Receives and disburses funds.
 - (d) Keeps funds in a safe place.
- (c) Prepares periodic financial statements for presentation at the General and Executive Committee Meetings.

Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

- (a) Assists the Secretary and Treasurer in the execution of their duties.
- (b) Performs all the functions of Secretary or Treasurer in their absence.

Committee Members

- (a) Participate in all activities of the Association.
- (b) Assist other executive members in the execution of their duties.
- (c) Undertake tasks that may be assigned from time to time.
- (d) Serve in any capacity on any sub-committee that may be formed from time to time.

X. FINANCE

- 30. The finances of the PTA shall be independent of that of the school and shall be kept in a bank account in the name of the Association.
- 31. Money may be withdrawn from the account on the signatures of any two of the President, Vice President, Treasurer and one other executive member.
- 32. The affairs of the Association shall be conducted as a not-for-profit organisation. Its income shall be devoted to the general expenses of running the Association and no payment for services shall be made to any member.
- 33. It shall be competent for the Treasurer to retain in hand the sum not exceeding twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for current expenses.
- 34. In the event of dissolution of the Association, any assets remaining shall be handed over to the Head of the School to spend at his/her discretion for the benefit of the school.

XI. AUDIT

- 35. The accounts of the Association shall be audited before the Annual General Meeting.
- 36. The auditor(s) may not be a member(s) of the Executive but may be any competent member of or outside of the Association and shall be appointed for the ensuing year at the Annual General Meeting.

XII. CHANGE OF RULES

- 37. It shall be open to members in the Annual General Meeting to alter or vary the rules upon notice of motion which shall be lodged with the Secretary not later than fourteen days prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting. Such proposed change(s) shall be circulated to members at the time of the Annual General Meeting and a vote taken.

APPENDIX 2

GUYANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

CIRCULAR NO. 1/2008

REF. NO. ED: 5/25

FROM: The Chief Education Officer

TO: Deputy Chief Education Officers
Assistant Chief Education Officers
Senior Education Officers
Coordinator, School Board Secretariat
Heads of Education Departments
Coordinators/Directors of Education Projects
Principals of Institutions
Headteachers of Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools
Heads of Practical Instructional Centres

DATE: January 8, 2008

SUBJECT: PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

The Ministry of Education has taken the decision that all schools must have a functioning Parent Teachers Association. This Association may be existing in schools under names such as 'Parent Teacher Association', 'Community Teacher Association', 'Parent Action Committee', 'Parent Teacher and Friends Association' or such similar name. Whatever may be the name given, all Associations involving parents, teachers and other members of the community shall be guided by the contents of this circular.

It is expected that all Headteachers at the Nursery, Primary and Secondary levels would take all available actions to ensure that there is such an Association attached to their respective Schools.

Headteachers must study the attached document, which will be the constitution of all such Associations, and take the action necessary to have an Association, if by chance, none exists, or to have their existing Association functioning as outlined.

Please draw the contents of this circular and its attachment to the attention of all members of staff, and ensure that they affix their signatures and date hereon.

Genevieve Whyte-Nedd

C.	Permanent Secretary	<u>For Information</u>
	<u>Regional Executive Officers</u>	<u>Minister of Education</u>
	<u>Region #1-10</u>	<u>Minster within the Ministry of Education</u>
	<u>Secretary, Teaching Service Commission</u>	
	<u>General Secretary, Guyana Teachers' Union</u>	

APPENDIX 3

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER ALLIED BODIES

(1) **NAME**

The Association or other similar body shall be called the (*the name of particular school*) Parent Teacher Association or designation of similar body.

Where a Nursery Class or a Community school exists, there will be one Association for the entire complex.

Where Practical Instruction Centres (PICs) exist, the headteachers and staff of each PIC will attend the PTA meeting of the feeder school. The agenda of the meeting will accommodate issues relating to the PIC, and the PIC will be included in the planning process. Where there is more than one feeder school, the staff of the PIC will be allocated to attend the different PTA meetings, so there will always be representatives of the various feeder schools, at all the meetings. PICs are **not** to attempt to form their own PTAs.

Schools existing in close proximity may share the same Association, with the names of the schools appearing jointly to name the Association.

(2) **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the Association shall be to:

- (1) promote cooperation and a closer relationship between home and school to enhance the process of teaching and learning.
- (2) promote the welfare of children at school, at home, and in the community.
- (3) acquire and expend funds to enhance the programmes offered to learners by the school.
- (4) organise sessions to educate parents on the care and training of the child in the pre-school phase, the early childhood phase, the primary education phase and the secondary education phase.
- (5) educate parents in Education policies.

(3) **ACTIVITIES**

- (1) Exercise direct control over school canteens with members of the PTA having the first option to manage their operations in all nursery, primary and non-board secondary schools. In the case of schools with Boards, there must be negotiations with the Board which can exercise its discretion.
- (2) Pursue all avenues available to the Association to realise a membership that includes all parents/guardians of learners in the school.
- (3) Create a support group to offer guidance, counselling and other available means of assistance to parents experiencing problems with school-aged children.
- (4) Participate in a committee of management, involving the headteacher, with responsibility for making recommendations for the daily management of the school, including discipline and performance standards of the school. Performance standards must always be in keeping with the national standards set by the Ministry.
- (5) Foster relationships with other sister Associations in the drive for improved school environments.

- (6) Arrange for the academic, vocational and social development of parents where the desire is expressed and the need exists.
- (7) Plan a programme for defaulting parents in the area to send their school aged children to school.
- (8) Plan programmes to inculcate good habits and values in parents and guardians. Topics such as drug abuse, smoking, alcohol abuse, etc. could be dealt with.
- (9) Represent grievances of its members to the appropriate authorities, beginning at the level of the school, the Regional Education Department, the Regional Administration and further afield of necessary, in that order.
- (10) To undertake all available actions to support and complement the plans of the SIAC.
- (11) Develop a work plan to serve as the engine of growth and progress.
- (12) In the case of Board Schools, the PTA representative on the Board, and the headteacher, would update the Board on plans and activities of the PTA, and the Association will work in collaboration with the Board.

(4) PROGRAMME AND POLICIES

- (i) The Association, shall at all times, whether on its own or in collaboration with other agencies, act in such a manner as to promote the welfare of the school.
- (ii) A Committee shall be set up to develop and organise a programme that is educational, social, cultural, an administrative in nature.
- (iii) The Association shall participate in the formulation of school policies and through work plans, and have a say in the administrative practices of the school, through it relevant committee, and at general meetings. This privilege is not extended to individual members acting on their own. In this regard there shall be a Committee of Management.
- (iv) The headteacher shall advise the PTA on all technical/professional matters.

(5) MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be open to:

- (i) Parents and guardians of learners attending the school, and interested citizens in the country.
- (ii) All teachers on the staff of the school.
- (iii) Parents of past learners and past members of staff.
- (iv) any interested member of the community who wants to contribute to the Association's objectives.

(6) OFFICE BEARERS

The officers shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and a Treasurer. The office of the Vice President shall be held by the Headteacher of the School. In the case of more than one schools being involved, all headteachers shall be Vice Presidents, with the Senior Headteacher being the 1st Vice President, and the others following in subsequent order, i.e. 2nd, 3rd, etc.

In the case of PICs the Headteacher or the Senior Teacher of those allocated to attend the PTA shall also be a Vice President of the PTA.

Vice Presidents of any PTA shall always act in collaboration with each other. In the case of serious disagreements, the matter shall be referred, in the first instance, to the President for a decision. If there is still serious dissatisfaction the matter shall be referred to the Head of Department of

Education by the President or the dissenting Vice President, after he informs the President, for a decision, which shall be final and binding on all parties.

(7) THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(i) The Executive Committee shall comprise the Office Bearers and five (5) other members. The other members comprise three (3) parents and two (2) teachers on the staff of the school. Where more than one school is involved, one teacher and two parents from each school shall form the other members of the committee.

(ii) The Executive Committee shall have the power to fill any position that becomes vacant between elections.

(iii) This Committee shall:-

- (a) guide and direct the affairs of the Association.
- (b) Represent the interests of the Association to other agencies/bodies whenever the need arises.
- (c) Manage all funds raised by the Association.
- (d) Appoint sub-committees, which in turn may co-opt other members for such purposes as may be necessary from time to time.

(8) THE SCHOOL IMPORVEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SIAC)

The SIAC shall be a sub-committee of the PTA.

(9) ELECTIONS

(i) All members at the Annual General Meeting may vote for the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the five (5) or more committee members as the case may be.

(ii) Voting shall be either by the show of hands or by secret ballot, whichever the Association chooses.

(iii) All members of the Executive Committee are eligible for re-election.

(iv) Office bearers shall serve for one or two years as the Association shall decide.

(v) Office bearers can be removed from office by a majority vote of no confidence at any meeting of the Association. A replacement can be elected at the same meeting to serve the remaining term of the life of the Executive Committee.

(10) MEETINGS

(i) Two General Meetings shall be held during the course of each year. The first would provide a mid year update on the affairs of the Association, and the second would provide a final report on activities carried out over the past year, and make members aware of the plans for the new year.

(ii) Statutory meetings shall be held as often as the Association determines, but not less than twice per term.

(iii) Special meetings shall be called at any time by the committee or at the request of a quarter of the general membership.

(iv) The Association shall arrange for the conduct of grade level meetings in Primary and Secondary Schools, for its members who have children in a particular grade. In the case of Nursery Schools, year level meetings shall be arranged.

(v) Minutes of, and attendance at all meetings shall be taken and submitted in accordance with the 'SCHOOL RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS' booklet produced by the Ministry of Education. The headteacher shall provide the document and guidance necessary in this regard.

(11) QUORUM

- (i) Five members shall constitute a quorum for Executive Committee Meetings provided that at least two of the members are parents.
- (ii) Three members shall constitute a quorum for any committee meetings other than the Executive Committee, provided that at least one is a parent.
- (iii) At General and Statutory Meetings, 45% of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

12 FINANCE

- (i) The term finance, refers to the funds acquired by the Association, either by fundraising efforts or by donation(s), and must be distinguished from monies acquired by the school, either from the Ministry, Education Department or other official source.
- (ii) The funds of the Association shall be lodged in a bank account in the name of the Association.
- (iii) Money may be withdrawn from the account on the signatures of the Vice President, the Treasurer and one other member of the Executive Committee. In the case of more than one school being involved, each Vice President must sign, along with the Treasurer. On the prolonged absence of any of the signatories, action must be taken to have the new member performing the duties of the absent executive, to be made a signatory. Please note that all expenditure must be done on the authority of the Executive Committee or a Finance Committee appointed by them.
- (iv) No payment shall be made to members for services rendered in the normal functioning of the Association.
- (v) Payment may be made to a member for services rendered on special occasions, so decided by a majority of the membership.
- (vi) Cash to the amount of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) may be kept in hand by the Treasurer. Expenditure must only be incurred with approval of the Finance Committee.
- (vii) In the case of any event of an unforeseen nature, which affects the functioning of the Association, the Headteacher shall assume responsibility for the funds, until the Association is properly re-constituted. In the case of several schools being involved, the Senior Headteacher will take on this role. The Headteacher shall properly account for the funds while they are in his/her possession. The Head of Department of Education must be notified promptly in instances like these.

(13) AUDITORS

- (i) The accounts of the Association shall be audited before the final General Meeting.
- (ii) Two auditors who are not members of the Executive Committee shall be appointed to audit the accounts, which must be presented at the final General Meeting.

(14) RULES GOVERNING THE FUNCTIONING OF ALL ASSOCIATIONS

Parent Teacher Associations of all schools shall be governed by the rules outlined above.

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLE OF A FUNDING REQUEST FORM

The School community will have a chance to vote on the 2010 - PTA
Budget on Meet the Teacher Night

Have an idea you like?

As opportunities present themselves throughout the school year that are not covered in our current budget, you may request funds through the PTA. Requests will always be considered, yet the likelihood of approval is increased when fundraising expectations are met and/or surpassed, when the requester will take responsibility for coordinating and carry out the request if approved, and most importantly when the request benefits the School student community.

PTA Request Form

Name of Requestee:

Date:

Email: Amount of Request:
\$.....

I am requesting money for the following:

(Please be detailed, including date, additional information that can be attached)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Please submit this to a PTA Executive or give it to the Head Teacher Office. Requests that require a purchase should attach a quotation.

Reimbursement

Please print and submit the below information for reimbursement

Date: Reimbursement amount

Event/Line Item:

.....

(Note: Sales tax exemption form should be used when making purchases if possible)

Make check payable to:

.....

Phone number: Email:

.....

Please indicate how you would like this check delivered: Pick up at school Pick up
from Treasurer

Please attach all receipts. Photocopy for your records prior to submitting in the PTA Box.

Treasurer's Use Only

Check date Check # Voucher #

APPENDIX 6

EXAMPLE OF A PTA BUDGET

Income	Actual	Budget	Difference
Auction	85000	90000	-5000
Dad's Club	35000	20000	15000
Interest	8000	6000	2000
Matching Gifts			0
Membership	20000	12500	7500
Fun Day	70000	80000	-10000
Games Night	45000	30000	15000
Total Income	263,000	238,500	24,500
Expenditure			
Bank Charges	1,000	1,500	-500
Community Outreach	5,000	7,500	-2500
Curriculum Needs	25,000	30,000	-5000
Health & Safety	10,000	20,000	-10000
Book Fair	8,000	7,000	1000
Pageant Night			0
Total	49,000	66,000	-17000
Field Trips Grade 1	10,000	20,000	-10000
Field Trips Grade 2	10,000	20,000	-10000
Field Trips Grade 3	10,000	20,000	-10000
Field Trips Grade 4	15,000	20,000	-5000
Field Trips Grade 5	15,000	20,000	-5000
Field Trips Grade 6	15,000	20,000	-5000
Other Field trips			
Field trip total	75,000	120,000	-45000
Internet Charges	60,000	80,000	-20000
Total Expenditure	267,000	356,000	-89000

Total Income	263,000	238,500	24,500
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Difference	-4000.00	-117500	113,500
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Please use this example to create your own PTA Budget.