

PAC Handbook Variety Schools Grant Program



How to unite your school and transform learning into a more accessible and inclusive experience for all students!



Welcome to the Variety Schools Grant Program!



This PAC Handbook serves to help you engage other parents and decide on the inclusive school project that will make the biggest impact at your school.

Experiencing a roadblock that you don't see a solution for in this handbook? Contact Anna Polden at schools@variety.bc.ca for support. Together, we can help schools across the province find success on their journeys to make learning more inclusive and accessible for all students!

Parent Engagement at School

Joining a Parent Advisory Council is a fantastic way to ensure that you as a parent have a voice in your school community. Introducing new ideas and successfully making a positive impact for students requires enthusiasm and support from parents and guardians from many backgrounds.

This document serves to help you identify barriers which may be preventing others from participating in school meetings and activities and offers potential solutions for you to increase parent engagement at your school.

Common Barriers to Parental Involvement

Time

- Parents may be working full-time, have varying hours of work or work out of town
- Parents with a child who is not yet in school or who have children attending different schools may find that their time is easily interrupted and that their attention is divided

Family Circumstances

- There may be an infant or child with special needs who requires a higher level of care
- There may be a complex family structure (blended families, sibling caretakers or single parenting)

Geography

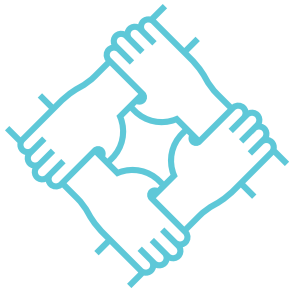
- Families may need to travel a significant distance for their children to attend the school
- Parents may not have safe or reliable transportation to attend extra-curricular events and meetings (relying on public transportation or reside in an area with damaged infrastructure)

Discomfort

- Parents may have unpleasant memories of their own experiences in school
- Male guardians may feel out of place if parent engagement is mostly attended by women
- Parents may feel they lack knowledge or skills which put them at a disadvantage (such as difficulty with reading or writing or speaking English as a second or third language)

Unfamiliarity

- Parents may perceive a membership of a formal parent body as closed, cliquy or elitist



Inclusivity and Diversity starts with you!

Parents & guardians who can participate and add value in their own capacities and abilities are more likely to support the PAC and help generate impactful ideas that transform your school!

Engaging Parents and Guardians

- Make clear indications that parents are welcomed and valued – try creating welcoming posters or setting up a designated parent's corner at the school; develop what this looks like with other parents and ensure as many languages as possible are represented
- Create opportunities for parents to get involved at various times, including both regular (i.e., weekly) and infrequent activities and with meetings in the evenings as well as during the day
- Acknowledge cultural or religious festivities – time conflicts or prior commitments that are of importance to other cultures may prevent participation; be mindful of these occasions and plan school events around them (or ask someone with lived experience to get involved to help your school celebrate them!)
- Consider financial limitations – investigate ways to waive costs or make arrangements for those who may not be able to participate due to monetary reasons
- Be aware of unique abilities – prepare to support those with disabilities or language differences so they too can be included
- Offer opportunities to get involved at the enrollment stage – ask parents what would help reduce barriers for their family specifically (such as translation/interpretation, childcare, transport, etc.)
- Contribute to the school development plan – create opportunities for staff, parents and students to have discussions about the different ways parents could be involved in school activities and leave with a plan or clear next steps of how these ideas will be developed and supported
- Seek ways to support with childcare or transportation – offer one-off solutions for the time of your events or meetings to ensure parents can attend
- View meetings as social events which also serve to build relationships between parents, teachers and other school staff
- Request that teachers personally invite and encourage parents to get involved
- Accept volunteers – ensure no parent who offers to help is turned away, match the skills and enthusiasm that parents bring to the needs of the school
- Plan inclusive activities – make it easy for families to take part and develop positive relationships with each other and school staff (such as picnics and cultural celebrations)



How to Apply for a Variety Schools Grant

1. Choose your Inclusive Project: Meet with your PAC, Principal and/or Special Education staff to identify and brainstorm ways to make learning more accessible for students with unique learning needs.
2. Get your quote from your chosen vendor, see our preferred vendors guide for ideas and resources.
3. Determine a budget and set a fundraising goal to reach 50% of the quoted cost. Variety will match your fundraising proceeds.
4. Map out a timeline to implement your project.
5. Download your application from the Variety Schools Grant page on our website: <https://www.variety.bc.ca/grants/variety-schools/>
6. Submit your application along with the required supporting documents to schools@variety.bc.ca before the deadline listed on our website.

Please allow 2-3 weeks for Variety to review your application.

How it Works

Variety BC pays only your chosen vendor and cannot pay the school directly. If your application is successful, your school's matched funding will be granted upon the completion of a purchase order submitted by Variety. The school is required to submit its fundraising proceeds to Variety for this purchase order to be completed.

Supporting Documents Checklist

1. List of your school's parent advisory council members and roles
2. Your most recent audited financial statement(s)
3. Quotes and/or your estimated expenses with preferred vendors/sources
4. Outline of all planned fundraising projects for this school year
5. List of your current funders and government grants for this school year
6. Signed Conditions and Requirements Form (included in this application)
7. Letters of reference (optional – you may want to ask parents and/or special education staff to share their perspective for this need)



**For more information
contact Anna Polden**

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