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Committees Basics

Committees are the working machinery of PTA and are essential to its effectiveness. Each committee is formed to address a specific need. Their work is subject to the direction and approval of the membership. Committees should be encouraged to develop new ideas and ways of doing their work. They should be challenged to improve on past good work and to strengthen the effectiveness of the committee. Committees should consist of members who have been appointed or elected on the basis of their qualifications and their willingness to work to accomplish the association's goals. Samples of all Forms and Reports mentioned in this section are in the Forms section of this guide.

Types of Committees

There are two types of committees for PTA work: Standing Committees and Special Committees.

Standing Committees

A standing committee has a permanent function, which is fundamental to the operation of the unit. The number and type of standing committees will vary according to the needs of each unit and should be specified in the units Standing Rules. The following are usually identified as standing committees:

- Membership
- Programs
- Legislation
- Community Outreach
- Reflections/Cultural Arts
- Publicity/Marketing
- Budget
- Fundraising
- Family Engagement
- Volunteer Involvement
- Hospitality

Standing committees are selected by each new administration's executive board. Before they officially take office the newly-elected officers may meet for the purpose of selecting the chairs of standing committees. These committees serve for a term of one year. Oregon PTA Bylaws do not prohibit individuals from being re-appointed to a committee by successive administrations.

Special Committees

Special committees are created as the need arises. They are appointed for a specific task and cease to exist when their job is completed and their final report is given. The following are examples of special committees:

- Nominating
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Founders Day Program
- Specific Event Committees

Special committee chairs (except the Nominating Committee Chair) are appointed by the president with the approval of the executive committee/board. Because the Nominating Committee is so different than any other committee, their members should refer to Nominating Committee section of this guide for more information.

Committee Chairs

Committee chairs should be chosen on the basis of their qualifications and willingness to commit adequate time and energy to completing their assignments. **All Committee Chairs MUST be members of their local unit.**

Responsibilities of Committee Chairs

- Reviewing the procedure book, job description, and resources before beginning work.
- Coordinating the work of the committee.
- Speaking on behalf of the committee.
- Presiding at committee meetings.
- Organizing preparation of a Plan of Work/Action Plan and budget requests.
- Presenting Plan of Work/Action Plan and budget requests for approval.
- Keeping accurate financial records.

- Preparing and presenting reports.
- Providing copies of reports and forms for the unit secretary and procedure book.
- Updating and returning the procedure book.

The chair of a committee should also:

- Remember that the unit president is an ex officio member of all committees (ex officio means: by virtue of office), except the nominating committee, and should be advised of all meeting dates, times, and locations.
- Give meaningful assignments to each member of the committee.
- Create an environment in which all members feel comfortable participating.
- Encourage opportunities for committee members to develop leadership skills and personal skills.
- Periodically evaluate the work being done.
- Recognize and appreciate the members of the committee.
- Use the resources and expertise available through Oregon PTA and National PTA.
- Undertake substantial work only with approval.
- Speak or act on behalf of the unit only with authorization.
- Seek approval for changes to the plan of work or spending beyond budget allotment.
- Establish a timeline and guidelines for status reports from members of the committee.
- Avoid “burn-out” by requesting additional committee members for heavy work overloads.
- Have all publicity, notices, etc., approved prior to sending out.
- Provide unit treasurer with receipts for all reimbursements.
- Take advantage of opportunities to improve knowledge and skills by attending council meetings, workshops, and OPTA convention.
- Contact counterpart at the state or council level for assistance.

Procedure Books

It is important that you keep a procedure book for your office so that when it is time to hand over the office to the next person, they have everything they need to get started off right. Every PTA officer and committee should have an established Procedure Book.

The primary function of a Procedure Book is to provide a record of previous work, useful materials, and information relevant to a specific job. Procedure Books are passed on from one administration to the next, eliminating the need to redevelop important information and materials.

A three-ring binder is useful for the Procedure Book, since materials may be removed and added as desired. The contents of a Procedure Book will vary according to the particular job. The following list of “basics” should be included:

- Job Description.
- Contact information with addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.
- Predecessor's records and final report with evaluation and recommendations.
- Pertinent state and National PTA information and training materials for position.
- Name, address, phone number, and email address of State Board counterpart.
- Bylaws and Standing Rules.
- Copy of approved Plan of Work/Action Plan if applicable
- Copy of approved Budget
- List of potential volunteers if applicable
- Copies of reports to membership if applicable
- Copies of publicity, if applicable.
- Minutes of meetings (board, committee, general membership) as applicable.
- Copies of final reports, evaluations, and financial statements.
- Copies of contracts, etc.
- Applicable materials from workshops or convention.
- Planning calendar.
- List of sources and contacts.
- Other materials helpful to the position

For future reference, date all materials as they are added to Procedure Books.

The information in Procedure Books should be kept intact. If segments of the book are useful to other committee or individuals, those segments should be copied, not removed from the book.

Procedure Books are the property of the local unit and must be returned to the Executive Committee/Board upon completion of the term of office or handed on to the new leadership as soon as possible.

Committee Members

The efforts and commitment of its members will determine the success of any committee. When selecting members for a PTA committee, consider the following characteristics:

- Skills, experiences, or interests which will benefit the committee.
- Willingness to devote time and energy to accomplish the association's goals.
- Ability to work well with others.
- Receptiveness to training opportunities.
- Courage to try new things.
- Dependability.
- Enthusiasm for PTA work.

Note: *The unit president is an ex officio member (ex officio means: by virtue of office) of all committees, except the nominating committee. Ex officio status enables the president to attend committee meetings with all the privileges of other committee members (offering motions, speaking to motions, voting).*

Committee Preparations

It is the responsibility of the unit officers to provide each committee with the instructions, materials, and information needed to accomplish its task in a proper and efficient manner. A little time invested in preparing a committee at the onset of its work will preclude misunderstandings and disappointments later.

Arrange to meet with each committee chair to review the following:

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- **Committee Assignments** - Providing a written copy of the committee's assignment will ensure a clear understanding of the task to be accomplished.
 - **Procedure Book and Materials** – Discuss contents of the procedure book and available materials. If a procedure book has not been established for the committee, start one. See details later in this chapter on how to make a procedure book.
 - **Preparing a Plan & Budget** – Review procedures for preparing and submitting a plan of work/action plan and budget for approval.
 - **Status Reports** – Establish a timeline for status reports and Provide guidelines for reporting or copies of your of report form.
 - **Committee Evaluation Form** – Advise the chair to prepare a final evaluation upon

completion of assignment.

- **Final Financial Statement** – If funds are involved in committee work, instruct the chair to submit a final statement.
- **Contracts** – Remind committee chairs and members that they do not have authorization to sign contracts for services or products on behalf of the unit. All contracts must have the approval of the Executive Committee/Board or membership and also must be signed by the president.

Productive Committee Meetings

A chair can improve the effectiveness of committee meetings by keeping in mind the following pointers:

Before the Meeting:

- Notify all committee members and the unit president of the meeting date and location. Be specific about the purpose of the meeting, the topics to be discussed, and the starting and ending times.
- Prepare an agenda, in advance. If possible, distribute the agenda prior to the meeting.
- Make sure you have everything needed for the meeting. Gather all information and materials which will be useful to the committee.

During the Meeting:

- Start on time.
- Review agenda and tasks to be accomplished.
- Select a member of the committee to record minutes.
- A majority of committee members must be present to transact business.
- Stay on task; accomplish all of the agenda items before moving on to unrelated discussions.
- Give everyone an opportunity to participate.
- The chair of the committee has the right to vote and be an active participant in discussions.
- Make decisions by a vote of the committee members when consensus cannot be reached.
- Stay within the parameters of your approved Plan of Work and Budget.
- At the end of the meeting, review decisions and assignments.
- Establish a timeline for status reports.
- End on time.

After the Meeting:

- See that the summary of the meeting (minutes) is sent to all committee members and the unit president.
- Follow up on assignments; confirm work is being accomplished.
- Prepare and present a status report for the membership.
- Update the procedure book.

A Committee's Plan of Work/Action Plan

A committee's first task is to prepare a plan of work/action plan to submit for approval. The terms plan of work and action plan are interchangeable and refer to a proposal for accomplishing the committee's assignment. No work should begin until a plan has been approved.

Developing a Plan of Work/Action Plan

- Review assignment. Confirm committee members have a clear understanding of the purposes and scope of their responsibility.
- Gather Oregon and National PTA materials which apply to the work.
- Consult relevant sections of this guide
- Examine Procedure Book and past committee's reports and recommendations.
- Check with unit secretary to determine if association's minutes contain comments or suggestions pertaining to committee's work.
- Brainstorm ideas for achieving task. Consider new ideas to improve the performance of the committee.
- Reach consensus on a plan for accomplishing the committee's work.
- Determine funding ideas (if applicable) and prepare a budget for approval.
- Prepare a written plan of work/action plan.
- Submit plan to executive committee/board for approval.

Committee Budgets

Most local units will include a line item on their annual "approved budget" for standing committees and the special committees that will repeat established projects or programs. When a new committee is formed or an established committee is not included in the budget, it will be necessary for the committee to submit a budget for approval. Funds cannot be spent without approval.

Developing a Budget Request

Committee budget requests begin with careful examination of the committee's plan of work/ action plan. The members of the committee will need to anticipate the amount of funding necessary to accomplish their task. Make a list of the products and services which will require funding. Determine their potential costs by reviewing a minimum of three estimates for each product, service, etc. (The exception: services offered or required by the school or district.)

If the committee functioned last year, examine the past committee's final financial statement. How well did the budget meet the needs of the previous committee? What impact will this year's plan of action/work plan have on funding? Do not rely on past figures. Confirm current costs for products and services. After the committee has identified its projected expenses, draft a budget request which reflects the findings.

Budget Approval

The committee chair should present the budget request to both the executive committee/board and then to the unit's membership for approval. Whenever possible, the budget request should be attached to (or incorporated within) the committee's plan of work/action plan when it is presented to the executive committee/board for approval.

Authorization for the expenditure of funds is not granted until the committee budget has been approved by the unit's membership which can be part of the overall unit budget approval or separately approved to amend the units budget . Once the committee's budget is approved, the committee does not get further authorization unless their plan changes.

Tracking Committee Progress & Completion

Once a committee's plan of work/action plan and budget has been approved, the responsibility for accomplishing the work is relinquished to the members of the committee. As long as the committee operates within the limits of its approved plan and budget, they should be allowed to proceed, unhampered, with their work.

Routine status reports keep the executive committee/board and membership informed of the committee's progress and confirms that it is operating within the scope of its assignment. To encourage consistent, timely, and concise reporting, create a "generic" status report form for committee use. Utilizing a prepared form will simplify the filing of reports by the unit secretary and provide committee chairs with a guideline for preparation.

A status report should include:

- The name of the committee.
- The date of the report.
- The name of the body hearing the report. (Membership, Executive Committee, etc.)
- The name of the chair.
- Evaluation of progress to date.
- Current status of work.
- Preview of upcoming work.
- Recommendations or requests.

If the report includes a recommendation or request from the committee, the person giving the report (usually the chair of the committee) moves for its adoption. Motions offered on behalf of a committee do not require a second to be discussed. Copies of status reports should be provided for the unit secretary and a copy placed in the committee's procedure book. Copies may also be requested by the president and treasurer.

When work is complete, the committee chair should submit a final report showing how outcomes and how all funds were spent.

Nominating Committee

It is the responsibility of the nominating committee to recognize and seek qualified nominees for the elected leadership of your PTA. Therefore the members of the committee have a tremendous influence on the future of your PTA and should be carefully selected. Nominating committee members should have a broad acquaintance with the membership and an understanding of the organization's functions and its purpose.

The rules for electing PTA officers are defined in the Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws. The following is an outline of the step-by-step procedures necessary to adhere to the requirements set forth in the bylaws.

Nominating Committee Section Process

The elections of officers should always begin with a nominating process. This process provides the entire membership with an opportunity to have a say in the selection of the unit's officers. Being elected to the nominating committee is one of the highest honors that can be bestowed on PTA members. The general membership has chosen these fellow members to represent them in the process of identifying, screening, and recommending the best potential candidates for office. The committee should include both experienced leadership as well as newer members. All candidates for office must be members of your PTA.

The Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws state: "there shall be a nominating committee composed of at least three (3) members, to be elected by this local PTA/PTSA unit at a general meeting, at least one month prior to the election of officers. The committee shall elect its own chair." Each unit's standing rules may indicate the number of persons to serve on this committee (a minimum of three and an odd number is preferable) and when they will be elected.

The president may not appoint the committee, may not serve on the committee, and is not an ex-officio member. Nor is it appropriate for the president to exert any influence on the committee's selection of nominees. **Note:** *The principal, if a member of your PTA/PTSA, may be elected to the nominating committee, or serve as a resource.*

Members of this committee should possess:

- Current PTA membership status.
- A clear understanding of the duties and expectations stipulated in the bylaws and standing rules for the various offices
- Interest in and enthusiasm for the purpose and programs of your PTA, and the willingness to work and devote time to them.
- Objectivity.
- High qualities of tact, integrity, and confidentiality.
- Courage to express ideas and to defend one's convictions.

- Sound judgment and skill in evaluating possible nominees.
- Knowledge of your PTA's goals.
- General knowledge of potential candidates' qualification and abilities.

It is recommended that a member not serve on the nominating committee for two (2) consecutive years.

Alternates

Alternates, also elected by the membership, do not attend meetings, but should be advised of the date and time of the first meeting.

Any elected members who cannot attend the first or any succeeding meeting must notify the chair of the nominating committee immediately to ensure the first alternate is contacted to serve. This alternate then replaces said member and serves as a permanent member of the committee for that and all future Nominating Committee meetings.

Duties of a Nominating Committee

Members of the nominating committee should meet as soon as possible to elect a chair. This first meeting should be held early enough to have a second and a third meeting if necessary. Only members of the committee may attend meetings. Meetings must be rescheduled if a quorum is not present. A quorum is the majority (more than 1/2) of the members of the committee.

Duties of the Nominating Chair

The chair of the committee is responsible for:

- Presiding at committee meetings.
- Coordinating the work of the committee.
- Speaking on behalf of the committee.
- Contacting potential nominees approved by the committee.
- Informing committee members of the results of contacts.
- Preparing and reading the official committee report.
- Advising the nominees to attend the election meeting and the installation of officers.

Prior to considering the names, the committee should study the bylaws and standing rules of the organization in order to define its duties and to refresh its members understanding of the

requirements of the offices. Membership lists from the association should be provided to the committee. Only those persons who are eligible (current PTA members) and who have given their consent to serve, if elected, shall be nominated for office. It is also recommended that the committee choose a member to record minutes; recording decisions, not individual discussion of potential nominees. The minutes can then be destroyed once the final report is presented to the membership.

Note: *It is not the responsibility of the nominating committee to fill committee chairs or other appointed offices for the new term.*

Remember, the nominating committee must put the good of the organization above personal obligations. While a good friend or popular member may want to be the new treasurer, another possible nominee may be an accountant, a bookkeeper, or have previous experience at another organization that makes this person a better choice. Also, remember not to allow personality clashes between committee members and those being considered for office to influence your good judgment.

Nominating Committee Deliberations

The selection of nominees should be an orderly process. Open and frank discussion must be held between members of the committee. Discussions are strictly confidential, and no information should leave the committee meeting, even after the officers have been elected. Every effort should be made to provide your PTA with a slate of officers that is balanced in terms of new as well as experienced officers, representative of the school population.

The majority of the committee must approve each potential nominee before the person is approached for consent to place his/her name in nomination. All votes taken by the committee should be by ballot. This is essential, no matter how silly it may seem. It prevents hurt feelings. All ballots should be destroyed after the slate has been filled. The committee is not obligated to nominate the president or any other current officer to serve a second term or to automatically nominate the vice president for president. Each nominee must be evaluated equally and by the same criteria as all other nominees.

Don't limit deliberations to people the committee members know. Ask for recommendations from the board, the membership, and also from PTA presidents of any feeder schools. However, the committee is not obligated to select nominees from the recommendations it receives. Members of the nominating committee are not excluded from becoming nominees for

elected office. During committee meetings, should a member be nominated, this member should be excused from the meeting room during the discussion regarding that office, but may return for the vote, which shall be by ballot.

A PTA member may not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms in the same office (Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws). A PTA member may not serve in more than one (1) elected position at a time in a local unit (Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws). The length of a "term" should be defined in the units standing rules

Nominees for president, president-elect (if applicable), vice president(s), secretary, and treasurer should be obtained in that order. If possible, fill one position before moving on to the next. It is not the job/duty of the presidential nominee to decide their running mates. This decision rests solely with the nominating committee. The nominating committee is not required to select more than one nominee for each office (unless directed in unit's standing rules). If however, two equally qualified people wish to run for the same office and the committee endorses each, submit both names and let the membership express their preference.

Questions for Nominating Committee

Nominating committee members should ask themselves these questions as they go about the task of considering candidates for office:

- What do we need? (People with specific expertise, ties to the community, representatives of the cultural diversity of the membership)
- What do we expect? (Explain in detail – time, meeting attendance, committee work)
- Where are we going? What is our mission?
- Why are we doing this? What are our goals?

Qualifications to Look for in Potential Candidates

- Must be a PTA member – even candidates for office must be a member
- Desire to be in the position and Commitment to PTA
- PTA experience and/or PTA knowledge
- Awareness of duties/expectations for the position
- Sufficient time and energy to devote to the job
- Objectivity and personal flexibility as well as organizational skills
- Team oriented and the ability to speak up and express opinions

- Understand the value of training to improve skills

Contacting Potential Nominees

The committee chair usually contacts nominees to tell them the duties of the office and to obtain their consent to serve if elected. Remember, the majority of the committee should endorse the nominee before the nominee is contacted.

The person who makes the contact should advise each potential nominee that his name is being submitted to the committee “for consideration” and the final decision of the selection of nominees is up to the committee. To avoid hurt feelings, the contact person should make no promises or commitments, asking only for the individual’s consent should he/she be selected as a nominee.

Suggestions for making contacts:

- Don’t catch people unaware. Arrange a convenient time to talk.
- Let the person know that you want to talk about pursuing a leadership role in PTA.
- Be positive in your approach. Stress the individual’s qualities and how they would benefit your PTA.
- Don’t minimize the duties of the office. Provide an honest and complete job description, including the time involved and the opportunities for leadership training. (If requested, a printed job description could be provided.)
- Don’t insist on an immediate answer. Allow time for consideration, if needed. Call back for a response before approaching others about the same position.
- Accept a “No” response gracefully. Express appreciation, and encourage continued involvement.

Individuals considering accepting a nomination for an elected office should be advised of the responsibilities of the office, and may include attending leadership training, workshops, and/or the Oregon PTA annual meeting held during state convention.

Report of the Nominating Committee

Once the committee has completed its slate of nominees, a written report is submitted to the membership. This may be done at a general meeting or through a flyer or newsletter. Each unit’s standing rules should indicate when the committee will present its report and when elections will be held. To allow the general membership time to consider nominees, units should present the report one (1) month prior to elections. The report should list each office and the

committee's nominee(s). The report should be dated and signed by all members of the committee.

The nominating committee is automatically discharged when its report is presented to the membership. However, if a nominee withdraws prior to the election, the committee may be reconvened.

Note: If a vacancy occurs during the year, the elected office shall be filled by a person elected by a majority vote of the general membership. Prior notice of a minimum of fourteen (14) days of such election shall be given. (Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws.)

The nominating committee report is also read at the election meeting (if different from the meeting at which it was first presented). The written report is then handed over to the presiding officer. No action is taken on the report itself, but is entered into the minutes. The president reads the complete report again. At this time, nominations may be made from the floor.

Nominations from the Floor

After reading the report of the nominating committee, the presiding officer calls for nominations from the floor, office by office, being careful to give members adequate opportunity to present names of their choice. This procedure allows the membership to add additional names to the slate if they are not content with the recommendations of the nominating committee.

Nominations from the floor do not require a second. When it appears all nominees have been named, the chair (president) again asks if there are further nominations, then declares the nominations closed.

Elections

Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws state that officers are elected by ballot; but if there is only one candidate for any office, the election may be by voice vote. (Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws, Article VI; Officers and Their Election, section 2, subsection b.) All business, including the election of officers, is conducted by the president. He or she announces if the election will be by ballot or voice vote based on the number of nominees for each office.

Prior to elections, the president should appoint a Tellers Committee composed of members (usually three) who are not candidates for office or members of the Nominating Committee. One teller is designated as the chair. Voting for each office should be handled separately. A

majority of the votes cast (whether by ballot or voice vote) is necessary to elect an officer. The chair of the Tellers Committee should have ballot slips available even though the Nominating Committee may have presented only one name of each office. The ballots should indicate the name of the PTA, date of the meeting, nominees from the nominating committee, with additional space provided for each office for nominations from the floor, and be uniform in color, size, and shape. If a member requests a vote by ballot for any office, the request must be recognized and voted upon without debate.

Conducting the Election

Confirm a quorum is present. If not, voting cannot take place and the election will need to be rescheduled. The quorum for conducting business should be indicated in the unit's standing rules.

The president explains the voting process and restates the list of nominees. The president also reminds the membership that:

- Only members may vote. (A membership list must be available at this meeting.)
- A majority is necessary to elect an officer.
- Absentee or proxy ballots are prohibited (Oregon PTA Unified Local Unit Bylaws).

If voting is done by ballot, tellers distribute, collect, and count the ballots. They prepare a report listing the number of votes cast (including illegal ballots), the number of votes needed to elect, and the number of votes received by each candidate (announcing this last one is optional). "Write In" votes are listed on the report. Each teller signs the report. It is the duty of the teller's committee to account for every vote cast, not to announce the "winners."

Ballots are considered illegal if:

- They are illegible.
- They contain the name of a nominee who is not a current PTA member
- Two or more filled out ballots are folded together. These are recorded as one illegal vote.
- It is not clear whom the vote is for.

The teller's report is read by the chair of the tellers committee, and then given to the president. The president restates the election results and declares those elected.

The teller's report is entered into the minutes. The membership may give consent to destroy the ballots once the election is complete. If the ballots are not destroyed, the secretary will hold them for one month. A challenge to the election procedure or outcome must be made during the election meeting.

Each unit's standing rules should indicate the date on which the new officers will assume their duties (usually July 1st). Don't forget to congratulate your new officers and applaud yourselves for completing an election process which allowed the entire membership to contribute to the selection of capable, qualified leaders.

Officer Installations

Newly elected PTA officers may be installed in a special ceremony. Although this is not a requirement, an installation ceremony provides an opportunity to reaffirm the purposes of PTA, recognize the efforts of the outgoing board, and express support for the new officers. The installing officer may be the outgoing president, a current or former PTA leader, a council or state board member, or your principal. An installation may be as formal or informal as your membership desires. Each unit may create its own ceremony or adapt one from the files maintained in the state PTA office.