



SGBs, staff and relationships

- *The election of staff to the SGB and their role therein*
- *The relationship between the Staff members on the SGB and the other SGB members*
- *The relationship between the Staff members on the SGB on the one hand, and the Principal and SMT on the other*

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Manual for School Management

- **Chapter 7.1: Governing Body and SMT Functions and Relations**



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Some background

- **For first time in SA history, SASA in 1996 made provision for inclusion of staff on SGB**
- **Welcomed by some, abhorred by others**
- **However, like it or not, it is fact of school life**
 - Includes both educator and non-educator staff
 - Compulsory components, not “if you feel like it”
- **Has unfortunately become source of significant friction**
- **Very much consequent upon role uncertainty**

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*Electing staff members
to the SGB*

Electing the staff component

- **Very straightforward in most instances**
 - All members of respective constituency have votes equal to number of vacancies (commonly 1, 2 or 3)
 - Open to all relevant employees from that constituency, whether state or SGB employed
 - Rule of thumb – if SACE registered, employee is an educator
 - If not, is a non-educator
 - May vote only within own constituency
- **Election logistics**
 - Must take place before parent elections
 - Must be 'managed' by the same electoral officer as the rest of the election

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Three common Qs and As

- **MUST** the school's deputy or 2-I-C be one of the staff members elected to the SGB?
 - Not necessarily – staff free to nominate and vote as they wish
- **MAY** the school's deputy or 2-I-C be one of the staff members elected to the SGB?
 - Yes - if that is the way the staff wish to vote
- **SHOULD** the Deputy or 2-I-C be on the SGB?
 - It can be problematic if the 2-I-C is NOT at SGB meetings, should s/he suddenly be required to act as principal
 - To cover this eventuality, some staffs have a 'common practice' which sees the 2-I-C as one of those elected onto the SGB
 - Where this is not the case, some SGBs co-opt the 2-I-C onto the SGB, or have him/her present 'by invitation'

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The role of staff members on the SGB

Some important misconceptions

- Increasingly, staff members on SGBs see themselves as 'shop stewards' rather than governors
- They view their role as looking after the interests of the staff
 - But this encroaches on the role of the unions
- They arrive with a mandate instead of applying minds
- They overlook their real mandate, which is to:
 - Serve the best interests of the school
 - Bring an educational perspective to governance deliberations
- They, whether consciously or not, usurp some of the prerogatives of the Principal and the standing of the SMT

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What, then, is the role of staff members on the SGB ... ?

- Staff members on the SGB are full SGB members in their own right
- They do not represent the interests of any group
- Like any other SGB member, they are required to give fair consideration to and enhance the interests of all stakeholders, not any sectoral interests – certainly not staff alone
- Educator members are in a unique position to
 - Assist principal in ensuring governors understand and appreciate educational issues at play
 - Bring a teacher's perspective to the table
- Non-educator members also give their unique perspective on issues facing school as a whole

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Some basic expectations ...

Staff members on the SGB must:

- Attend meetings regularly
- Become familiar with and adhere to the Constitution of their particular SGB
- Acquaint themselves with provincial regulations relevant to the SGB
- Provide the SGB with balanced perspectives on the general views of the staff, in order to assist the SGB with decision-making

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More basic expectations ...

- **Staff on the SGB must be impartial**
 - They may not take sides as a result of prejudice or collude with other members of staff or SGB members
- **The converse also needs to be avoided**
 - Staff members dare not allow governors to co-opt them in order to support a "cause" - equally unacceptable
- **Can a staff member can vote against the principal in the SGB?**
 - Absolutely "yes"
 - But one must be convinced that that is *the right thing to do in the best interests of the school*

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Tasks staff-member governors may legitimately be asked to fill ...

- Serve as treasurer or secretary
- Serve on or even be elected as chair of one of the subcommittees (with the exception of a Disciplinary Committee, which must be chaired by a parent member of the SGB)
- Be involved in setting goals in the academic arena, together with results-improvement strategies
- Be involved at a similar level in discussions around extra-murals, safety, school uniform, the condition of physical amenities, grounds and sports fields
- Give advice and collect information on the pricing and selection of suitable teaching material and equipment
- They can also play a valuable role when the budget is being generated

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Some philosophical/behavioural issues ...

- Staff members are “close to the ground” where issues affecting the school are concerned:
 - They have a unique level of access to parents and parental concerns
 - They are very aware of criticism and negative feedback
 - Also of positive feedback
 - Can thus present a very different – though complementary – view to that aired by other members of the SGB
 - Should therefore be free to place matters and/or concerns on the agenda that are of such a nature that they would either enhance or protect the activities and name of the school

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Some philosophical/behavioural issues ...

- On a personal level, staff members on the SGB need to:
 - Utilize membership as great opportunity for growth
 - Develop greater insight into the overall working of the school and increase the staff members' own opportunities
 - It doesn't mean, though, that a staff member elected to the SGB may use this position to further his/her personal aims

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Relationship with the SGB

Some sensitive issues ...

- Can members on the SGB can be ‘mandated’ (i.e. instructed by the constituency that elected them) to vote in a particular way on a particular issue?
 - “No” – they are required to weigh up the possibilities and then vote in accordance with their *own judgement or professional discretion*, not on or according to the instructions of others
- How much ‘confidentiality’ can be expected?
 - Confidentiality is critical and has major impact on relationships
 - There should be an understanding of confidentiality weighed together with the privileged position they hold vis-a-vis information in the school
 - With many matters they will hear the story well before the principal informs the rest of the staff – must maintain confidentiality until official announcement is made

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Some ‘interesting cases’...

- The SGB staff are dissatisfied with their remuneration packages and conditions of service:
 - Management/Union issue at first call, but changes will have to be enacted by SGB: Take it up with management
 - If no progress is made, call on the assistance of a union official
 - *Management* (that normally means the principal) should take it to SGB at the appropriate time, not the staff member
- The staff are unhappy with the term programme and the number of major events on the calendar:
 - This is a Management issue
 - Take it up with the Principal, not the governing body

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Some ‘interesting cases’...

- The staff would like the length of the school day lengthened, as they find it almost impossible to get through the curriculum (or shortened, because they believe it is too long for the learners to concentrate):
 - Combined Management/Governance issue: may be brought to the SGB after advising the principal accordingly.
- The staff feel that in the light of the changing nature of the children enrolled at the school, the subject choice should be expanded to include Xhosa Home Language, CATS and Hospitality Studies:
 - Combined Management/SGB issue, with final authority resting with the SGB: Raise first at management level, and debate vigorously when it comes up at SGB level.

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Interacting with the principal and SMT...

- Behaviour of staff before and during SGB meetings
 - Staff are full members of SGB and are entitled to participate fully and make views known
 - Matters placed on agenda by staff should be discussed with, or at least mentioned to the principal, prior to any SGB Meeting
 - Important not to undermine relationship between the staff and the principal, or SGB and principal, but to enhance it
 - Issues may then be vigorously supported (or opposed) when it comes to debating them

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More basic expectations ...

- Should staff on the SGB report back to the whole staff on matters raised in the SGB?
 - Discretion and sensitivity should be exercised in the dissemination of any information
 - If role is properly understood it will be recognised that staff as members of SGB have no greater right to report to staff than parent members have to report to parents
 - Communicating SGB discussions or decisions are the prerogative of the SGB chair and principal
 - At no time should the prerogative of the principal to inform the staff on school matters be usurped
 - Nor should any confidentiality be breached

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If the 2-I-C is co-opted or invited ...

- The 2-I-C has no vote under these circumstances
- S/he must
 - Be sensitive to the situation and its nuances
 - Not sideline, overshadow or take over the role of the elected staff members in any way
 - Allow him/herself to be co-opted to undermine the principal
 - Not allow him/herself to be co-opted by any grouping to drive their particular agenda via or at the SGB
 - Not use the situation to make the staff an overly powerful group on the SGB

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And that's that!
