INDEPENDENT SCHOOL PARENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND AVOIDING THE UGLY

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The opinions expressed in this book are not necessarily those of the publisher, NAIS.
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chools have many important resources: their physical plants, their teachers, their staff, their students, and their alumni. One of the most important resources, however, is the parent body. This group carries the “word of mouth” into the community to current prospective parents, they are inclined to donate to the school most actively, and they are currently motivated to bring ample man- and woman-power to bear on school projects that cannot be staffed by paid employees alone. Supporters within the parent body can stave off a revolution and provide priceless insight into school challenges. However, this can also be the hardest group to harness and organize. Many schools have parents’ associations; others have loosely grafted together groups of parent volunteers. This publication was born of an effort to help schools that are seeking more guidance or practices as they move toward a more established parents’ association body or tweaking their current model to reflect healthier practices.

Independent School Parents’ Associations is divided into two key parts. The first offers a general overview of parents’ associations as they exist in independent schools, including some of the common dilemmas schools experience. The second section walks through the thought process and drafting of bylaws for a parents’ association, including some data points reflected in other schools. In addition, there is a case study that describes the experience that the Gunston School had while reconstituting its parents’ association. Through these sections, we aim to explore the complexity, challenges, and rewards of an independent school’s relationship with its parents’ association, summarize some important findings of a recent survey of independent school heads regarding parents’ associations, offer suggestions about how to start a parents’ association at the school, and provide some “best practices” guidelines for bylaw and relationship development. You will find the actual survey results starting on page 37.

The authors would like to thank all of the schools that generously shared their parents’ association bylaws, as well as their time and input.
I. 

PARENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Parents’ associations are powerful entities within schools and they elicit wide reactions from independent school heads and administrators. For most, the term “parents’ association” triggers feelings of relief and gratitude as a result of their partnership with an army of volunteers who labor selflessly and tirelessly on behalf of the school, assisting to further its mission. Others express ambivalence about the inability of their parents’ association to navigate the boundary between support for the school and lobbying for personal agendas. Some recount epic moments of conflict between the parents’ association that occasionally venture on the absurd. (Our favorites: “What do you mean we can’t auction off an Arabian Horse at the upcoming fall festival and use the proceeds to erect a 10-foot-marble statue of our favorite retiring teacher in front of the school entrance!?” or “A mechanical bull would make our auction a huge amount of fun!”). In rare but painful cases, some speak of parents’ associations like “a third branch of government,” consistently attempting to push its agenda upon the school with little or no regard for the school’s wider strategic goals, or, in the worst cases, like an insurgent “guerrilla group” that needs to be disrupted, undermined, and crushed.

Overall, however, independent schools enjoy a remarkably positive, healthy, and productive relationship with their parents’ associations. When we first began approaching this topic, 75 heads of independent schools participated in a broad survey to provide us with some key data points and feedback on parents’ associations in independent schools.*

They reported that their parents’ associations have never been more essential to the smooth functioning of their schools, especially during a time when many schools are struggling with budgets and resources. Indeed, over 90 percent of heads surveyed report that their relationship with their parents’ association is either “positive” or “very positive,” and over 95 percent report that the parents’ association has either a “positive impact” or a “very positive impact” on the life of the school. Yet the relationship between a school and its parents’ association is fraught with potential landmines, and can be a source for significant conflict within the school setting.

The Independent School and Parents

Before addressing the question, “What is a parents’ association?” you must first consider a more basic issue: What is an independent school parent? Are parents purchasers of an educational commodity? Are they unconditional advocates for their child? Are they full-fledged “mission partners” with their child’s school? Depending on the day and issue, the answers to all of these questions is often yes. Adding to this complexity are the amalgamation of interpersonal relationships between parents (often reflected in their students and vice versa) and the diversity of experiences that each parent brings to the table with strong and unique political, social, religious, and cultural biases. Beyond these fundamental challenges are the intense interactions schools and others have with many parents today. Authors like Robert Evans, Michael Thompson, and Wendy Mogel have chronicled the shifting norms of modern parents to more demanding, vigilant, and involved parents than schools have seen before. These interactions have given rise to

*This survey and its results are provided at the end of this publication.
many now familiar terms — helicopter parents, hover parents, and hyper-parenting. Indeed, NAIS direct research has reflected the level of involvement that parents are seeking. A 2006 research study on Generation X and minority parents advised schools that:

Parents want to be engaged with their children’s lives and education. Particularly at independent schools, parents believe they should be able to contact and influence their children’s teachers and school administrators. The parents are seeking a responsive and nurturing environment, so they are on the lookout for teachers who interact one-on-one with students. They are looking for teachers and administrators who listen and heed what they have to say, and they will judge schools based on the accessibility of the faculty and administrators on their initial visits.

From Marketing Independent Schools to Generation X and Minority Parents
Belden Russonello & Stewart
2006

This complexity of the relationship between a school and its parents’ association mirrors the competing philosophical, psychological, sociological, organizational, and political issues that invariably arise in the relationship between parents and the school. When these parents group together, the school leadership often finds itself facing an uprising from a new body of descriptors — the parking lot mafia or sports utility vehicle caucus. These names alone can be apt descriptors of what can happen when a school does not have a parents’ association as a vehicle to bring parents together and work with the school, or what can happen when the relationship with the parents’ association is not nurtured and managed effectively.

From Parents to Parents’ Association

Perhaps the most unusual dynamic regarding the nature of parents’ associations in independent schools is that parents are involved in a very personal, high stakes purchase from the school by choice. Since the welfare of the customers’ most treasured “investment” (their child) is at stake, parents’ financial investment and emotional attachment to a school extends well beyond the relationship with most other products in their lives. Therefore, they are typically motivated to contribute their time and energy to the school. What makes the process uniquely interesting is that the “investment” acts with the unpredictability of any human, requiring the school’s product to constantly change and customize, and occasionally enforce its process in conflict with the customer’s wishes. Of course, the school survives on the success of its product, making this relationship paramount. As any school knows, any perceived failure of the product to deliver can trigger responses that can significantly disrupt the relationship with the school. In essence, therefore, a parents’ association is a somewhat odd and awkward organizational unit: it is an attempt to formalize the relationship between the customers and the “product” they are purchasing, where the customers assume a great deal of authority and responsibility for the advancement of the school’s program and mission without the typical supervisory oversight, and where the customers are also expected to assume a supportive yet subsidiary role.

Despite this somewhat perilous state, it is clear that parents’ associations overwhelmingly serve as powerful engines of positive contribution to schools, and at many schools, their presence and existence is elemental to the smooth functioning of the school. However,
unlike students or faculty, parents largely exist outside of the school’s formal supervisory and sanctioning capacity, and therefore the school has limited ways to address behavior that is disruptive or inappropriate. In some schools, especially those with tenuous enrollment, the purchasing power of parents, coupled with the limited leverage of schools to address poor parent behavior creates an uneven dynamic that can make parents the most powerful and potentially disruptive constituency within the school.

Indeed, with the words “powerful” and “energy” and “force” being most frequently associated with parents’ associations, perhaps the best metaphor to use in regard to parents’ associations is that of electricity. Electricity is a wonder of modern science, is essential to our modern existence, and makes possible things that were once impossible. At the same time, electricity, if carelessly monitored, managed, and channeled, has the potential to deliver quite a painful (and sometimes deadly) shock.

Parents’ Association and Schools Research: A Study in Variation

Again, despite these dynamics, our research reveals that the relationship between schools and their parents’ associations are generally healthy, with over 90 percent reporting that their relationship with their parents’ association is either “positive” or “very positive,” and over 95 percent reporting that the parents’ association has either a “positive impact” or a “very positive impact” on the life of the school. It’s a testament to the shared values of independent school educators and independent school parents that these values are aligned so well. While our survey questions covered very specific data points, there are some points of contention with which schools routinely wrestle:

1. How are parents’ associations “situated” within the school structures of independent schools? How do they relate to the board of trustees?

Of the many questions related to parents’ associations, one in particular seems especially important: to whom do they report? Again, schools take a wide variety of approaches to this issue. 72 percent of schools describe the parents’ association as an “auxiliary organization reporting to the school administration”; in 16 percent of schools, the parents’ association is a free-standing, independent organization, in essence, reporting to itself; in 10 percent of schools, the parents’ association is a board subcommittee that reports directly to the board of trustees; and 14 percent of schools describe their structure as “other”: i.e. “partnership, reports to nobody,” “authorized, but does not report to the board,” and “subsidiary organization of the school that works in partnership with the school.”

There is also large variation in regard to the parents’ association president’s formal relationship with the board of trustees. 22 percent of schools report that the parents’ association president is a full voting member of the board; 35 percent of schools have the parents’ association president as an ex officio, non-voting member of the board; in 9 percent of schools the parents’ association president makes regular reports to the board, and in 34 percent of cases, the parents’ association president has no contact with the board whatsoever.

2. What is the relationship between the parents’ association and the head of school?

Almost every surveyed head noted the value of making a strong investment into their relationship with the parents’ association and
stressed the importance of remaining “close” to the agenda, leadership, and activities of the parents’ association. Some heads are formal members of the parents’ association, with 36 percent of heads serving as ex officio member of their parents’ association. Even if they are not members, a significant majority of heads report that they meet regularly with their parents’ association president, usually on a monthly basis, and such meetings serve to keep the channels of communication open between the school administration and the parents’ association. One head particularly stresses the importance of working with the parents’ association leadership to manage the cultivation and appointment of each generation of parents’ association leadership, attempting to ensure that leadership roles are filled by individuals who can manage the roles effectively, and without significant disruption.

In this regard, almost every head surveyed noted that the school had designated an individual to serve as the formal liaison between the school and the parents’ association. In some schools, this liaison is the head of school, but a significant percentage of schools placed the responsibility for the parents’ association in the hands of the director of development or the director of communications. Fully 22 percent of schools employ a full or part-time director of parent relations, who serves as the bridge between the parents’ association and the school. Titles vary: director of parent relations, parents’ association liaison, manager of community relations, associate director of development for parent programs, parent program coordinator, and parent liaison.

In regard to the parents’ association’s relationship with the development office, most heads noted that they are “inextricably linked,” and that the advancement office works “closely” or “directly” with the parents’ association to coordinate fund-raising. Again, the language varies significantly in regard to this relationship, with some schools noting that the advancement office “guides,” “partners with,” and “supports” the parents’ association’s fund-raising; while others note that the advancement office “oversees” and “monitors” the activities of the parents’ association. There are varying

3. Who is the primary liaison for the parents association? What is the relationship between the school’s development office and the parents’ association?

Before discussing the manner in which schools work with their parents’ association, we felt it was interesting to note that our research revealed two very different trends in language used to discuss the relationship between the schools and their parents’ association. Some schools noted that the ways in which they structured the “partnership” and “coordination” with their parents’ association while others framed the relationship in terms of “supervision” and/or “oversight” of the parents’ association.

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levels of formality in regard to how the parents’ association and the advancement office interact, and the survey also revealed the strong potential for “competition” between the parents’ association and the development office. As one head explains, some schools have gone as far as to structure a regular formal meeting between the development office and the parents’ association:

The heads of all parent support groups attend a quarterly Fund-Raising Steering Committee meeting, coordinated by a member of the Advancement Team—designed to have all fund raising groups at the same table in order to coordinate all efforts and not have them in unhealthy conflict.

Space is another key issue, and a number of schools have designated spaces for their parents’ associations to use for their work on campus. One head notes:

Our Parents’ Association has its own headquarters on campus, which includes files, workspace, copy and fax machines, phones etc. Parents have permission to be on campus at any time as long as they respect the boundaries of the classrooms. There is also a Parent Lounge on campus so that parents have places to gather.

4. Parents Association and Finances

Although it may not be stated explicitly in every mission, parents’ associations invariably involve themselves in fund-raising, and thereby in the handling of funds. In this regard, we explored several questions in our survey with school heads:

1. Who supervises the finances of the parents’ association?
2. Where are the parents’ association’s funds “housed”, and
3. Who determines how money raised by the parents’ association is spent?

In regard to the accounting and housing of Parents Association funds, 70 percent of heads report that the parents’ association has a sub-account within the school’s larger account, while 25 percent report that the parents’ association has an account separate from the school. The approval of expenditures also trends towards collaboration with an individual employee, typically the business manager, which involves either the approval of all expenditures or expenditures over a certain amount of money. Fully 75 percent of the school’s parents’ association finances are included in the school’s annual audit. In general, the handling of funds seems to be an issue that schools and parents’ associations are mastering: over 95 percent of heads report that the parent’s association funds are managed satisfactorily, well, or extremely well.

In regard to the key question: Who determines how these monies are spent? Our survey shows that schools offer varying levels of funding control to parents’ associations:

- **No discretion**
  Some schools offer their parents’ association zero discretion in how to spend their funds. One head notes that all of the funds raised through parents’ association activity “go directly to the annual fund,” while others note that “the administration decides how the money raised is to be spent, but the parents’ association board is fully consulted and notified.”

- **Collaborative discretion with the school**
  A much larger percentage of heads note that parents’ association funds are spent on priorities that are “decided collaboratively” and identified between the school and the parents’ association. One head writes, “in cooperation and discussion with the head of school, the parents’ association determines where excess funds will be of most use and
value to the school.” Another head notes that the parents’ association identified spending priorities “in consultation with administration—-they have some discretion in making choices among administrative requests but cannot spend money on items not requested.” Another head notes, “the administration has set clear guidelines for class fund-raisers so that parents are not overwhelmed with “opportunities.””

• **The “wish list” concept**
  Another approach many schools employ is the “wish list” concept. The head supplies the parents’ association a “wish list” of requests that they can choose among, and the parents’ association has the discretion to choose between a number of options.

• **Total discretion**
  A small number of heads note that their parents’ association has “total discretion” and “utter flexibility” in regard to how funds raised by the parents’ association are spent. One notes that the parents’ association has “too much flexibility.”

**CORE DILEMMAS**

A wise colleague of ours once quipped, “There are problems and there are dilemmas. Problems are issues that can be solved, whereas dilemmas are issues where competing interests simply have to be balanced, and where there is no steady, consistent, and straightforward solution.” Based on our survey, here are some of the core dilemmas of parents’ associations:

• **The “outlier” volunteer:** One of the great challenges of managing a parents’ association is the “outlier” volunteer, the person who disrupts the dynamic of the group, pushes personal agendas without regard to boundaries, fosters dissent and negativity, and/or does not respect the appropriate channels for decision-making and authority.

In our discussion with heads of school, it is clear that no vaccination currently exists to prevent an outlier from becoming an active parents’ association member, nor is there a single cure for addressing outlier behavior. In our discussion with heads, it is clear that the best way to prevent an outlier from becoming a problem is to develop clear expectations for the association, ensuring adherence to bylaws, and working with the parents’ association to help manage leadership transitions. At many schools, heads have a significant voice in helping to select (or veto) members of the executive committee. As one head notes, “Making sure the nomination process identifies the right people for the jobs available and is equitable in developing new school leaders for various committees and activities is important.” Of course, outliers occasionally need to be confronted directly, with the unavoidable messiness and bad feelings that are associated with such confrontations.

• **The inner core vs. outer core:** While there are many exceptions, in both our discussions with heads and in our own experiences, parent association leadership and involvement tends to reflect a heavily female and more affluent segment of the parent body, where the work of volunteering for the parents’ association can often become the central focus of the leadership group’s time and social experience. Although the combination of time and dedication of this group is essential to the success of the association, it can frequently lead to the development of a “clubby” or “clique-ish” atmosphere within the parents’ association that can alienate non-parents’ association types within the parent body. Complaints include the planning of events (and their...
timing) that do not always reflect the needs of the wider parent community, school favoritism towards “room parents,” and simply a non-welcoming atmosphere at association-sponsored events. While the inner vs. outer core dilemma can never be fully resolved, many parents associations recognize its danger to their effectiveness, and seek to develop a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, communicate with the wider parent body as often as possible, as well as coordinate meeting schedules in a manner that allows working parents to participate.

- **Fund-raising Alignment**: If there is one area where conflict seems to be more common than in other areas, it is misalignment and miscommunication in regard to fund-raising between the school and the parents’ association. The conflicts arise in regard to how events should be run, who is responsible for coordinating events, or how the money raised by the parents’ association will be spent. For this issue, the surveyed heads generally see the resolution of this dilemma as the responsibility of the school; that is, the school needs to organize the coordination between the development office and the parents’ association, and the school needs to ensure that parents have sufficient voice in how the monies will be spent, while also ensuring that the core needs of the school remain at the forefront. Several schools noted that the parents’ association became so successful at raising funds that it lost sight of its primary role as community builder, and in other schools where the development function/office was weak or understaffed, the parents’ association served as the de facto development office.

- **Leadership recruitment**: Depending on the school size, many heads report that it is a struggle to recruit strong and effective volunteer leadership, especially for major leadership roles. Volunteers, they note, are easier to identify than leaders, since in some cases, leadership of a parents association or a major fund-raiser can necessitate a full-time commitment.

- **Every year a new group**: Group dynamics theorists note that group identity evolves through four distinct stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Thus, with each new school year, a new parents’ association group forms, and with each new group comes a new dynamic. Heads report that the constant turnover of parents’ association leadership can be an obstacle to creating a culture or set of systems that remains consistent throughout the years. Examples abound regarding a great parents’ association vice president who makes an awful president, executive committee personalities that don’t mesh, or a new parent whose behavior drives away more productive volunteers.

- **Event-itis**: Some parents’ associations are so hardworking, dynamic, and creative that their effectiveness becomes a problem in and of itself. Too many events create burnout among volunteers, strain the faculty and administration who are expected to attend, dilute fund-raising, and simply pack the calendar too tightly for comfort or mental health. Indeed, one head reports that the most difficult part of his job is saying “no” to good ideas because of their impact on the calendar. This can put school leaders in a difficult position, where the school can seem heartless and cold; for example, when one school head rejected a proposal for a school-sponsored breast cancer awareness dinner because of the stresses it would have placed on an already tightly packed spring schedule.
KEY TAKEAWAYS

• **One size does not fit all:** As revealed in the survey, schools take different approaches to facilitating their relationship with the parents’ association. Depending on size, mission, and culture, there can be a large variation in the scope of the parents’ association’s mission, committee structure, relationship with the board of trustees, and the level of the parents’ association’s formality within the community. By understanding this high level of variation, schools should craft a relationship that best reflects the culture and mission of the school.

• **Good Bylaws:** Almost every head surveyed noted the presence of strong and clear bylaws for the parents’ association. The advice seems to be: keep the bylaws simple where they need to be simple, and ensure they are complex where they need to be complex— for instance, in regard to the nominating procedures.

• **A Clear Liaison:** In many schools, especially larger ones, a director of parent relations is essential. It is a role that is more difficult than some might think, and the person needs to be able to communicate with a powerful group of parents, keep a close eye to ensure that parents are staying within the mission and guidelines of the school, be able to put the brakes on parents when they are out of order, and serve as the go-between for the head’s office and the development office—all the while maintaining the trust of all parties concerned.

• **Communication, Communication, Communication:** Regular, formal interface between the school and the parents’ association is essential, and the relationship between the head of school and the parents’ association president is essential to fostering an alignment of interests, and identifying any red flags. Moreover, it is crucial for the parents’ association to have regular and formal communication with the entire parent body to keep its members duly informed of the parents’ association’s mission and activities. This regular communication is especially important between the school’s development office and the parents’ association. The aim is to develop a sense of partnership between school and parents, get an “inside line” on parents’ perspectives, have a heads-up about hot issues, and have the ability to test decisions and issues with a small, plugged-in group.

• **Validation and Voice:** Our survey reveals that the most successful relationships between schools and their parents’ associations are governed by trust, respect, and appreciation, and heads note how important it is to give parents encouragement and validation, while also helping them realize that a voice is not always a vote. Indeed, most schools report that they put together a formal appreciation event for the parents’ association at the end of the year. Another head sums up the core challenges of creating a positive and productive relationship with the parents’ association:

> Finding a way to allow all parents to feel heard and included in a community of our size and scope; having to say “no” to the plethora of perfectly “good ideas” that walk in the door which simply cannot be supported due to limitations in human resources, scheduling, facilities or by not being in concert with the needs or culture of the school.

• **Clarity about Finances:** Nearly every head reports that the financial parameters for parents’ associations are some of the most clearly defined elements of the school/parents’ association relationship.

*continued on page 11*
LAUNCHING A PARENTS’ ASSOCIATION: THE GUNSTON SCHOOL

At the Gunston School, our parents association was disbanded 10 years ago as a result of ongoing conflict with the school administration, and over the years, the school had made a conscious effort to keep the parents at arms’ length so as to reduce their negative influence on the educational process. Indeed, the phrase, “Give us your children, and trust us to educate them,” had become one of the school’s mantras. While parent involvement was not absent, the school assumed control of the major fund-raising events, and there was a distinct lack of formal, structured opportunity for parental leadership or involvement in the community.

As the years progressed, however, concerns grew about the lack of a parents’ association. By consciously keeping parents at arms’ length, some argued, many parents were perhaps staying even beyond arms’ length — that is, they would either not enroll their children, or choose to leave the school. Also, during the interview process for the new headmaster, it was clear that parents desired a more structured and formal channel for parent involvement beyond ad hoc opportunities. Also, due to some staffing reductions in the communications and special events office, the school was in need of more parental assistance with school events.

The genesis of the Gunston Parents’ Association (GPA) began with a steering committee, chosen by the headmaster, of the unofficial parent leadership (those who had shown deep dedication to the school by their volunteerism), to explore the idea of relaunching a parents’ association. The initial meeting included a short discussion about existing models of parents’ associations, challenges such an association might face, and an initial discussion of how the association might function. Before the first meeting, the headmaster compiled a series of parents’ association bylaws from various schools, and attempted to distill them into categories. He also put together a draft mission for review.

During the bylaw development process, there was a rich discussion about how layered and complex the parents association structure should be, given the Gunston School’s unique community characteristics: high school parents only (which inevitably lessens the leadership pool), small size (140 students), and a disparate geography that makes it difficult for families to easily access the school for meetings. Much of the steering committee’s discussion revolved around how to structure the committees (which kinds, how many), and on the issues of term length for parents’ association leaders. In the end, the bylaws reflected an executive committee-dominated parents’ association because, realistically, only a small handful of parents could dedicate significant time to the school and a small number of sub-committees. From there, the head drafted a set of formal bylaws for review, discussion, and approval, and in the next meeting, the bylaws were ratified by the steering committee, and then by the board of trustees.

One of the trickiest challenges was how to elect the initial leadership of the parents’ association. The bylaws included this clause: “leaders will be chosen from the steering committee in the initial year.” To ease the process of electing officers, the steering committee each received a roster of families, and we “coded” each parent as involved (!), potential leader (PL), or demonstrated leader (DL) — which signified a likely and willing parents’ association officer. As it turned out, the leadership structure developed organically, as the three parents who were likely presidential nominees (all on the steering committee) self-sorted: two expressed a desire NOT to be president (but would rather fill other officer roles), which left the one parent as the logical choice for president. Fortunately, due to her temperament, skill, and work ethic, she was the consensus choice of all involved.

Having reached consensus on the need for a parents’ association, the mission, the bylaws, and the leadership selection, we began the process of embedding the parents’ association into the
• **Diversity:** While diversity and inclusion questions were not central to the survey we administered, it is clear that creating a parents’ association that reflects the voices of a broad segment of parents by income, race, and geography is one of the core struggles of parents’ associations, and is a question that begs further study.

## II. FOUNDING OR TWEAKING YOUR PARENTS’ ASSOCIATION: CONSIDERATIONS AND BYLAWS

Schools vary widely in how they document their parents’ associations. Many of the points below relate to bylaws, but they may also be brought into operating policies or general guidelines that the parents’ association uses when taking on different tasks. More importantly, the following sections present questions all schools should consider when reviewing how its parents’ association works. There are a variety of checks and balances that schools should knowingly consider as they do their risk management in this area.

### Getting Started: Creation

As was the case at the Gunston School, most schools will begin looking at their parents’ association in fairly general terms, moving quickly to actual structure and controls. Before getting too far down that road, however, schools may want to take a minute to assess their terminology, duties, checks and balances, and get a handle on what it is, exactly, they are trying to create and why.

For some schools, there is already some sort of quasi-organized parents’ group that has been
operating for the school in some capacity for a while. In these cases, many schools determine that this group has become very important to the operations of the school, whether in volunteer organization, orientation, fund-raising, or some other way. If this is the case, then the school’s initial work should clearly involve those volunteers who are currently active within this functioning organization. The current practices of the group can help inform the conversation and guide the structure and duties that will be set in place.

For schools just starting down this road, it is helpful to take a minute to consider a framework for what they are trying to create. Many of the following questions are derived from the bigger picture take-aways in the terminology discussion below, but they may be most helpful for the school leadership when it is first beginning its discussions about what this body should do.

- What are the main objectives for this group? What roles will it fill on campus?
- How much will it cover and potentially coordinate other parent volunteer undertakings on campus? (e.g., room parents, parent orientation, parent mentors, admissions follow-up for families considering the school, etc.)
- Will it function as a separate entity or at the pleasure of the school and its board?
- How many officers may this entity need?
- Will it need a larger board in light of the work being done?
- What are the school checks on this entity? (e.g., working in consultation with the head of school, working with the business office, school board advancement committee member on the parents’ association board, business processes)
- If it is engaged in fund-raising, who decides how those funds will be spent?

What is this “association” legally?

In many ways, the naming of your organization can help you avoid some of the political pitfalls of the group in its operation. Many schools continue to call the parents’ association exactly that, out of either habit or inheritance from the previous administration. However, the very word “association” seems to imply that the group is somehow an entity independent of the school itself. This is usually the misunderstanding underlying friction points between the school and the parents’ association when issues arise. It is very important to remember what the school is either trying to create or trying to maintain with its parents’ association. The group should generally not be a separate, legal entity. It may operate with its own set of protocols or bylaws, but it should not be a separate corporation unless there is a true and good legal reason for it, usually relating to unusual risk to which the school should not be exposed. It is very important that the parents, particularly those running the group, understand that it functions under the umbrella of the school for a particular purpose. Further, as part of the school, the school needs to retain control and fiscal checks and balances over the funds that the parents’ association raises. This can be a key sticking point in the relationship over time. This is not to say that the parents’ association cannot have a say in how or where money is spent, but the school business office must maintain control and tracking over the funds and activities.

What are we trying to avoid?

There are many ways that a parents’ association can go “off the tracks.” Many have been noted earlier, but there are some specific to...
and creating the parents’ association that schools should bear in mind.

- As stated, the parents’ association should not be a separate entity unless there is a sound, legal reason for doing so. Even then, it should be carefully structured to provide checks and balances with the school.

- The parents’ association is not a “parent union.” Occasionally schools will find that the parents’ association either began, or starts to function (much to the surprise of the administrators) as a parent complaint and negotiation body. The association starts to hear parent complaints and brings them to the administration or, even more exciting, to the board for individual reporting or hearings. When the administration and the board make decisions that are not consistent with the feelings of the parent association, some schools have found that its own parents’ association is suddenly sponsoring candlelight vigils, creating Facebook pages, and raising money in direct conflict with school leadership decisions.

- The parents’ association is not a lobbying arm for teachers and school staff. Much like the problem above, some schools have found that the parents’ association commits itself to trying to reverse school leadership decisions on staffing issues.

- The parents’ association is not the ultimate decision-making body for school financing decisions. When parents’ associations begin to embody much of the fund-raising, it may want to prioritize project funding for the school. Many schools have had to face conversations explaining that the new roof needs to happen before the hockey rink.

- The parents’ association is not the school’s communications representative. When events occur that push a school unwillingly into the spotlight, media tend to reach out to any individual in a position of apparent authority. Officers of the parents’ association easily fall into this scenario and should be reminded of the school’s policies on speaking with the press.

- As stated above, the parents’ association does not actually belong to the parents running it at the time. As with the school’s board, the parents’ association is generally an auxiliary body to the school, which the current officers are holding in stewardship for future parents and for the school’s future. Reminding parents that their roles are temporary in the greater timeline of the parents’ association can be vital to ensuring that they maintain perspective in their work and goals.

By any other name...

Language choice can be an important part of the process that your school embarks on, so establishing early on your phraseology is useful. In this document, we talk about the “parents’ association.” However, as noted, this group is not really a stand-alone association in the truest sense of the word, and your school may have had a negative experience with a parents’ association. It does not matter what your school calls it, but it is better to be consistent from the beginning. Many schools fall into the habit of using acronyms, which can also be helpful. Some schools also, usually at their attorney’s urging, avoid the word “bylaws” for documents unless they are actually bylaws to a corporate entity. Other titles to consider are operating protocols, operating procedures, procedures, or any other number of names. If your school is just beginning its parents’ association, using one of these terms from the beginning may avoid confusion later. Schools also have found creative terms for the group that runs the parents’
association, including “executive committee,” “parent council,” or some other name. The differentiation can be helpful in terms of keeping the school’s board of trustees and the board of the parents’ association from getting confused, particularly in the drafting documents. In this section, we will generally use the terms parents’ association and bylaws so that there is no confusion for the readers, but schools should be aware that there might be a reason to use other terms in their place when creating a parents’ association.

**Bylaw Categories and their Issues**

Parents’ association bylaws have a wide range of practices and structures. Some bylaws tend towards extreme detail - others have tried to maintain it all on one page. The best operating principle is probably somewhere in between. These bylaws are essentially operating protocols that should lay out the mission and purpose of the parents’ association, the authority that it operates under, some basic operational components, and the key checks and balances on its operations. The bylaws will be followed by volunteers who are generally less inclined to read and follow a long complex document than the school’s own board because they are truly volunteers who do not have the same fiduciary and business obligations of a governing board of trustees. As such, the bylaws should be clear, easy to follow, and not overly regulatory in their complexity.

When reading the various pieces of example language below, schools should bear in mind that how the bylaws work together dramatically impacts the operation of the parents’ association. For this reason, it is important for schools to really think through the checks and balances that are built into the system that is being created and make sure that they are properly represented in the final draft. Not all of the language samples provided will work well with all of the other language examples; they are offered as examples to help schools think through some of the potential issues that may arise.

**Tone**

One trend that we did note in the collection of bylaws assembled for our review is the distinct tones that schools set in their parents’ association bylaw language. In some bylaws, the tone is clearly created as a result of largely negative history. Those bylaws tend to lay out in great detail all of the things the parents’ association should not do in its work. The second approach is more positive in that it focuses on the duties and works with which the parents’ association is charged. Either approach is certainly acceptable. Schools approaching parents’ association bylaws may want to bear in mind both examples so that their ultimate drafts provide clear guidance in the operating space of the parents’ association, and any areas where there may be confusion about where the lines of authority lie. Schools should consider what major concerns they might want to address by limits in the language they will use, but also where the group is encouraged to lead and operate.

**Where to Start**

Whenever you set out to create an operating protocol for an organization, be it a separate entity, a division, or an internal group such as a parents’ association, it is important to bear in mind the checks and balances that need to occur in the drafting. Within this document, the school needs to set clear boundaries in the association’s purpose and mission, as well as in its operations. Without some boundaries and direction, the parents’ association (or any entity) can become too broad and move in unexpected ways. The protocols also need to determine authority, in
terms of the structure of the parents’ association, but also relative to the school and the individuals within the school. These authority clarifications will help the leadership of the parents’ association know what they can and cannot do. And it will provide some expectations between the board, the school leadership, and the parents’ association so that they can all work together smoothly. Finally, the bylaws should also create expectations of the roles and the tasks that the parents’ association will serve. For some schools, these are clearly delineated; for others, it may be less so.

Generally, most schools likely have projects that the parents’ associations take on every year, such as the school auction, new parent mentor facilitation, and similar obligations. Even if the school opts not to include this level of detail in the bylaws of the parents’ association, including these tasks somewhere within the operating documents gives guidance to the parents’ association and its members.

By providing examples of the various terms that schools might use, we want to provide a good breadth of options. In light of the number of bylaws we have reviewed, there are a lot of options for schools to consider. These range from the very short and sweet, to more detailed options, with some warnings. Schools will need to determine what is best for their cultures, but it is wise to remember a key rule of drafting or tweaking these kinds of directional documents: draft in the best of times in preparation for the worst of times. If you are drafting or re-visiting such a document, think about:

- Does the language enable innovation while providing direction?
- Are the key topics that you hope the parents’ association will address included?
- If the individuals within the leadership of the parents’ association were at odds with board or administration, or they were receiving pressure to use the parents’ association to exert pressure on the school, is there sufficient language to clarify the role of the parents’ association?
- Are the school controls over the parents’ association clear to the board, school leadership, and the parents’ association members?
- Does the language provide:
  - the boundaries you wish the group to follow,
  - the authority the group has,
  - the authority to which it answers, and
  - the roles and tasks you expect it to accomplish?

**Mission and Purpose**

Whenever there is confusion or lack of focus, most entities turn back to their purpose and mission statements to guide them. Parent associations are no different. However, because the parent association is within the school and serving at the school’s pleasure, the purpose and mission are good places to provide clear direction. The scope of the direction can provide cues to the operational independence of the parents’ association (or lack thereof), the expectations of the school leadership, and the breadth of the parents’ association operations.

When asking schools about the elements that are explicitly identified within their parents’ association bylaws for mission-related statements, the top two areas identified were volunteering for school events (93 percent), and promoting a positive “spirit” within the school (85 percent). Also ranking highly were parent education (64 percent), parent orientation (58 percent), and volunteering for classroom duties (51 percent). Other schools mentioned that their parents’ association mission stresses the
importance of the parents’ association role in promoting communication within the community, embodying the mission, and supporting the general aims of the school.

Interestingly, only 63 percent of parents’ association bylaws mention fund-raising in their primary mission, although we suspect that nearly 100 percent of parents’ associations are involved in some form of fund-raising for the school. Also, over 60 percent of parents’ association bylaws explicitly state the expectation that the association cooperate with the school administration, and 25 percent of schools have gone as far as to describe what the organization is NOT, as well as what it is. For instance, “the parents’ association is not a lobbying organization or a forum for parent grievances...”

Schools provide this guidance for language:

The purpose of the ABC School Parents’ Association is to advance, through parent involvement, the state mission and core values of the ABC School.

or

The purpose of the Parents’ Association is to foster a positive spirit within the ABC community, to promote parent engagement, to provide financial support to the School, to orient and integrate all new members into the School “family”, and to assist the School in its efforts to provide educational opportunities, facilities, and assistance to its students.

or

The objective of the Parents’ Association is to promote a strong sense of community in partnership with the school and facilitate communication, cooperation, and involvement throughout the school community. In order to meet this objective, fund-raising may occur.

or

The purpose of this organization shall be to assist and promote education at the ABC School. The mission of the ABC Parents’ Association is to promote and support the goals and vision of the School. The Parents’ Association family will provide parents the opportunity to support each other and teachers in an informed, amiable, and receptive setting. Our success, as a Parents’ Association, will be founded on a culture of convivial cooperation and broad-based parent participation.

or

The purpose of the ABC Parents’ Association shall be:
1. To provide a means of communication and to promote cooperation between parents and school administrators, communicating directly with the Head to accomplish these goals. The association will not engage in directing or creating administrative activities or school policies.
2. To acquaint parents with the functions and objectives of the school; to provide parent education opportunities.
3. To respond to requests from the school administration for assistance and to develop activities in the school.

or

The purpose of the Association, herein named the ABC School Parents’ Association, is to foster a positive spirit within the ABC School family, to provide financial support to the ABC School, and to assist the ABC School in its efforts to provide educational facilities, opportunities, and assistance to its students. At all times, the Association will cooperate and consult with the school administration to ensure that the nature of its activities and the manner and timing of its contributions are consistent with the School’s educational purpose and financial needs.

or

Mission and Purpose:
1. The purpose of the Parents’ Association is to foster a positive spirit within the School community, to provide financial support to the School, and to assist the School in its efforts to provide educational facilities, opportunities, and assistance to its students. At all times, the Association will cooperate with and consult with the school administration to ensure that
the nature of its activities and the manner and timing of its contributions are consistent with the School's educational purpose and financial needs.

2. The Parents' Association shall be an auxiliary organization of the School and shall be subject to the direction of the School Board of Trustees, and, as such, is subject to the policies and supports the decisions of the School Board of Trustees and the School.

3. The Parents' Association shall be non-sectarian and nonpartisan, and the organization shall not seek to direct the administrative activities of the school or control its policies.

4. The Parents' Association is organized exclusively to further the educational purposes of the School within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future tax code.

All of these purposes serve their respective schools well. When your school is reviewing the purpose of its association, it should think about:

- **How broad to make the purpose and mission.** Does the school want to keep it generally expansive (e.g., in support of the school) or does it want to limit the language a bit to ensure that the activities are solely related to fund-raising and other school delineated events. These considerations can have an impact on how independent, quasi-independent, or non-independent the association works.

- **How clear is the language to a lay person who knows nothing about your school?** New parents getting involved for the first time will not necessarily understand the “buzz words” that school people use.

- **How appropriate is the purpose and mission of the school many years from now when all of the current players have moved on?** The language should be appropriate for the long-term use of the school and should be drafted with reasonable foresight.

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**Checks and Reminders**

Early in the bylaws document, it is not uncommon for drafters to include reminders of what the parents' association may not do, or under what authority the parents' association functions. This is particularly true if the school had a negative parents' association experience in the past. Some of the mission statements above contain similar language. The language below clearly states the authority of the school's board and will allow the board to provide a check to the powers of the parents' association without any surprises if it needs to do so.

The Parents' Association shall be an auxiliary organization of the school and shall be subject to the direction of the School Board of Trustees.

Along similar lines, schools include language that is intended to ensure that the parents' association is not used for political purposes. This can be helpful if your school is located in an area that is particularly prone to political involvement. It is important because there are very specific limitations on nonprofit entities being involved in lobbying or election activities. Some schools expand the language a bit, too, to ensure that readers understand that the organization's name should also not be used for more internal political purposes either.

This organization shall not promote, endorse, or engage in any commercial, religious, or political enterprise or campaign. The name of the organization, or the names of any of its officers in the official capacities in which they serve, shall not be used for any purpose except in connection with the regular work of the organization.

Schools considering including these kinds of “checks” in the document will want to consider:

- What concerns is this language trying to address?
- What future purpose will the language serve?
• Is the language straightforward, but not inflammatory?
• Are there specific concerns not addressed elsewhere within the bylaws that may, or should, be addressed separately?

Membership and Dues
One of the key questions that many schools face when defining the parents’ association is whether to automatically include all parents, or allow the group to be self-selecting. Most schools include all parents in the membership. Doing so invites all parents into the fold and, for many schools, helps the parents’ association better implement programs like new parent mentoring and volunteer organization.
Whatever membership direction a school should adopt, some of the following sample language should be included in the bylaws:

The membership of the ABC School Parents’ Association shall consist of all parents, or persons standing in place of parents, of students currently enrolled in the ABC School.

or

The membership of the ABC School Parents’ Association shall consist of all parents, persons standing in place of parents, and parents of graduates or students currently or formerly enrolled at the School.

or

The membership shall be open to all parents and guardians (or representatives designated to be guardians) of students of the School.

or

Membership shall be open to all parents or legal guardians of ABC students, the principal, faculty, staff, and community members.

Hand-in-hand with this decision is whether the parents’ association should charge dues. As the survey results indicated, 36 percent of the responding schools indicated that they charge some form of dues to become members of the parents’ association, although many noted that the dues are optional or voluntary. Inclusion of dues should be found in the bylaws, as well as how the dues amounts are set. Many schools allow the parents’ association board to set the dues structure. Schools that adopt dues should think about this approach carefully because the setting of membership dues is essentially setting part of the fees that families face from the school. It might be wise to have a recommendation come from the parents’ association board or executive committee to be ratified by the actual school board. Here is sample language:

Dues: Membership in the organization shall not require the payment of dues

or

Dues: The amount of the dues shall be determined by the Board of Directors of the ABC School Parents’ Association, as ratified by the Board of Directors of ABC School.

Structure
Once membership has been determined, then the nuts and bolts of the association’s functioning are on the table. There are several key decisions to make in this area.

Parents’ Association Officers and Board
In our survey, schools reported that most parents’ associations have similar leadership structures, with an executive committee, and sub-committees that address key issues within school life. Eighty-three percent of parents’ associations have an executive committee, and nearly all school’s parents’ association leadership includes the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. In many cases, the executive committee also includes roles like the volunteer
coordinator, committee chairs, grade parents, and various at-large members. A small handful of schools, recognizing the significant volume of work associated with being the president of a parents’ association, note that they split the role of president into co-president roles. In most cases, the executive committee meets on a monthly basis. Sizes of executive committees vary widely. While some schools noted in the survey that the parents’ association leadership meets weekly or bi-weekly, almost every school noted that the parents’ association leadership meets monthly.

Even with this data, a survey of various bylaws illustrated that there are many models for how a parents’ association leadership might be structured and stated. Below are some of the approaches:

• **Executive Committee** — In this model, the parents’ association elects the officers of the organization, generally chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer, and, occasionally, the past president. This group then organizes and oversees the different working groups of the parents’ association. This model seems to work well for smaller schools that do not have as many projects or classes to oversee. Some schools maintain flexibility within this arrangement to ensure that if a larger board is needed from time to time, there is the ability to expand:

> The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers of the Parents’ Association; the Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary, if appointed by the President (with the assistance of the President-Elect); and up to five (5) at large representatives appointed by the President (with the assistance of the President-Elect), as determined by the President and President-Elect, to begin serving at the beginning of the President’s term.

or

The business and property of the Association shall be managed and controlled by its six (6) member Executive Committee in consultation with the Headmaster, subject to the policies of the Board of Trustees and the school. The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, Volunteer Coordinator, and the Member-at-Large.

• **Executive Committee with pre-defined Board** — In this model, the board is comprised of the officers, the chairs of the different operating committees (usually predefined in the bylaws or created as needed by project), sometimes the class or grade parents, as well as potentially one or two at-large members. This approach allows the committee chairs to run their committees and keeps a reporting structure in place. Here is sample language:

> The full board shall consist of the Executive Board, Parent Connection Representatives and Chairs of Standing Committees. Nonvoting ex-officio members shall consist of the Head of School, Division Heads of the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools, and an Alumnae Association Representative, or their designees.

• **Executive Committee with Board** — In this model, schools seem to have all of the above, or some of the above, and then open election seats as well. This model may work well if there is more decision-making that must be done by the board of the parents’ association as opposed to pre-determined committees and duties, or if there is generally more work that comes up during the year that seems to call for a full-blown board. Here is sample language:

> The Board of Directors shall consist of 11 voting Directors (who must be members in good standing), elected in accordance with the
election provisions provided herein, as well as the following non-voting ex officio members: the Principal of the School as well as the Past President.

Schools should be aware that the more complex the entity is, and the more apparent decision-making power that it has, the harder it can be for the school to oversee its activities. The more the parents’ association functions as its own complete and somewhat complex organization, the more it may create its own identity, which can eventually be at odds with the school. This is not to say that it should not work in that way. Indeed, many of our schools are so big and have so many complex activities happening at any given time that the parents’ association must work in this way to coordinate all of the volunteer and other efforts happening within the school. However, schools will need to bear in mind that such complexity may also require ensuring that the checks and balances between this entity and the school itself are more strongly defined so that the school does not find itself at odds with the parents’ association.

When designing the size of the board and structure, schools should consider:

- The scope of the work of the parents’ association and whether that work needs a larger or smaller oversight body. Will the parents’ association be the de facto development arm of the school such that interactions with alumni and other groups are important, or will it be a piece of the development puzzle?
- The culture of this entity and what the school would like to see. Will this group be likely to follow detailed regulation on meetings, reports, and other dog-ears of corporate structure, will it be more casual in its operations, or will the system evolve over time?
- The culture of the parent body. Are the parents likely to attend meetings, vote on elections, and work well within this structure, or will it tend to be more classroom driven and less involved with a traditional parents’ association? In some schools, the transparency of this body is more important to the parents than that of the school board because of the visibility of the potential day-to-day impact of the parents’ association on family life at the school. This sort of focus by a school community may require more structure.

On School Representation

One question that every school encounters is where, or whether, to include a school staff member on the parents’ association board or not. As the survey results provide, of those answering this question, 40 percent noted that the head of school was a member of the executive committee of the parents’ association. For many schools, this is a cultural question and will also depend on what other checks and balances are in place. If the parent association board is smaller, then the addition of the head of school on the board might provide too much weight and signify a degree of mistrust with the parents’ association. Even if the board is bigger, the reporting structure or another liaison connection between the school through the development office or a parent association liaison might be sufficient to ensure that the school’s interests are kept at the forefront.

Schools should bear in mind that the issue is not necessarily about final outcome and control, but ongoing relations to ensure that the school and the parents’ association do not get to the point where the school has to assert authority over the parents’ association. In this area, schools have as many options as they can imagine. Some schools ensure that the executive committee of the parents’ association
has the head of school on the committee; others work “in consultation” with the head of school, or the school’s chief financial officer, or development director, or some combination thereof. Some schools have a parents’ association liaison who coordinates much of the work of the group and really helps connect all of the parties to ensure open communication. Any of these options are workable, but they should all be considered when looking at the school culture and the desired outcomes. What is important is that schools creating a new parents’ association or revisiting their existing structures openly recognize the need for a strong connection between the administration and the operations of the parents’ association.

**Officer Roles and Responsibilities**

Many parents’ association bylaws include both titles for the various officers as well as descriptions of their obligations. The titles and their roles are similar to those found in standard board descriptions, although there are occasionally variations that customize the role for the parents’ association model. There are two examples provided below.

**Officer Responsibilities:**

5. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association and the Executive Board, maintain order during the transaction of business, put motions to a vote, and perform all other duties deemed necessary. He/She shall be an ex-officio member of all committees, and shall present the annual Parents’ Association report to the Board of Trustees. The President is also responsible for maintaining general oversight of the Annual Auction. Guidelines for the President shall be reviewed annually.

6. The Vice-President shall assist the President and shall assume the duties of the President when that officer is unable to perform them because of illness or absence. He/She shall assume the duties of Class Parent Coordinator, and shall serve as a liaison between the class parents and the general Board.

7. The Secretary shall keep and post the minutes of the proceedings of the Board meetings and the Annual Meeting of the Parents’ Association. He/She shall furnish the minutes of the meetings to the Chairman for approval, and shall make and distribute copies of the minutes to the Board Members, designated administration or staff, and to a posting location available to the parent population. The Secretary shall be responsible for all aspects of the production of the Parents’ Association Newsletter, to be published two times per year, and shall take care of all courtesy correspondence of the Parents’ Association. The Secretary shall also handle publicity for all Parents’ Association activities.

8. The treasurer shall keep an accurate account of all financial transactions of the Parents’ Association and shall report the financial situation at every meeting of the Board. He/ She shall furnish copies of his/her report to the other officers; the monthly report shall become an addendum to the minutes. The Treasurer shall present a preliminary annual report at the Annual Meeting of the Parents’ Association. At the end of the fiscal year, the Treasurer shall submit a final report to the Association, and shall supply accurate financial records to the accountant of the School for the purpose of preparing the annual tax return. The Treasurer shall also explore new fund-raising projects and bring recommendations to the Board.

9. The Volunteer Coordinator shall coordinate staff of all School volunteer activities throughout the year. The Volunteer Coordinator shall be responsible for organizing and recruiting chairpersons for the School’s fund-raisers and for seeing to it that these fund-raisers operate within the policies of the Association, the Board of Trustees, and the School. The Volunteer Coordinator shall also coordinate programming for the new parent orientation and develop a parent interest survey, gather results, and distribute names to the appropriate project or committee chairman.
10. Member-at-Large: One member at large shall be appointed.

Or

Role Descriptions

1. President.
   a. Take overall responsibility for the operation of the Parent Association at all levels.
   b. Plan the agenda, and schedule and conduct the monthly steering committee meetings.
   c. Plan the agenda, and schedule and conduct the monthly Executive Committee meetings.
   d. Meet monthly with the head of school.
   e. Consult with and support all school-appointed committee chairs, including events, activities, and the boosters organizations.
   f. Make sure that all programs and meetings are entered on the school calendar, and serve as calendar coordinator.
   g. Collect and review parent association materials needed for the directory and family handbook.
   h. Create the budget with the Parent Association Treasurer and committee chairs. Bring to a vote by Executive Committee no later than October.
   i. Serve on the School and Family Partnership Committee.
   k. Coordinate the preparations for the Parent Association Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon. Assist the Second Vice President in appointing a chair for the Volunteer Luncheon and other designated year-end events.
   l. Assist the First Vice President in appointing Committee Chairs for the following year.
   m. Serve on the Nominating Committee.
   n. Write year-end report to pass on to the incoming president.
   o. Work with the school to inaugurate and enhance designated all-school traditions.

2. First Vice-President
   a. Agree to serve as President-elect.
   b. Attend monthly Steering Committee and Executive Committee meetings.
   c. Meet monthly with the Head of School and the Parent Association President.
   d. Attend the month School and Family Partnership Committee meetings.
   e. Serve on the Safe and Secure Council.
   f. Serve on the Nominating Committee.
   g. With the President, appoint Committee Chairs for the following year.

3. Second Vice President
   a. Serve as a liaison between the Executive Committee and: all divisions, the Office for Institutional Advancement, and Marketing and Communications regarding divisional fund-raisers, the all-school fund-raiser, and Fund in Need.
   b. Provide the Executive Committee and School Committee chairs with current school-approved project list, School Fund-raiser Policy, and all current fund-raiser approval forms.
   c. Conduct studies to determine the current effectiveness of fund-raisers by looking at other comparable independent schools and their fund-raising practices, the parent volunteer pool utilization and productivity, donor preferences, and technology available. This review should occur every five years, starting in ____.
   d. Provide guidance, as needed, to ensure that all fund-raisers meet the guidelines and objectives of the school and the Parent Association.
   e. Represent the Parent Association in working with the Office of Institutional Advancement and the Board of Trustees, as needed, to develop and maintain school fund-raising policies.
   f. Serve on the Nominating Committee.
   g. Write a year-end report for submission to Parent Association President and to pass on to incoming Second Vice-President.
h. Appoint chairs and oversee the following
events: graduation flowers, volunteer
recognition luncheon, and other events as
needed.

4. Treasurer
a. Serve a two-year term.
b. Collect the funds for all Parent Association
committees and events.
c. Supervise financial activities of Parent
Association committees and collect
financial data from Boosters, which
maintains a separate checking account.
Include Booster donations to school as
subset in the overall Parents’ Association
annual donations report to the school.
d. With Second Vice President, assure timely
disposition of fund-raiser proceeds.
e. Maintain Parent Association financial
records.
f. Attend monthly Steering and Executive
Committee meetings to provide oral and
written reports on current financial status
of the Parent Association.
g. Write year-end report for submission to
Parent Association President and to pass
on to incoming Treasurer.

5. Secretary
a. Take attendance and minutes at monthly
Steering and Executive Committee
meetings.
b. Send minutes from Executive and Steering
Committee meetings.
c. Send minutes from Executive and Steering
Committee meetings to committee
members.
d. Maintain a notebook to include agendas
and minutes from Steering and Executive
Committee meetings and all handouts
pertinent to those meetings.
e. If requested, prepare the Annual Parent
Association Report at the end of the school
year, including a summary from each
Executive Committee member.
f. Assist the President with other secretarial
tasks as requested.

g. Write year-end report for submission to
Parent Association President and to pass
on to incoming Secretary.
h. Order Parent Association stationery.
i. Manage the Parent Association Office.

6. Campus Chair (Lower School, Middle School,
Upper School)
a. Take overall responsibility for the operation
of the Parent Association at the campus
level.
b. Plan the agenda for Parent Association
monthly meetings; schedule and conduct
such meetings.
c. Oversee planning and implementation of
campus Parent Association events and
programs.
d. Attend monthly Executive Committee,
Steering Committee and School and Family
Partnership Committee meetings, and
report on campus activities.
e. Attend the Student Forum meetings as a
voting member (Upper School).
f. Appoint, consult with, and support the
Grade / Classroom Representatives, the
Committee Chairs and the Event Chairs.
g. Prepare and submit to the Executive
Committee for approval the annual campus
Parent Association budget and requests for
special funds for miscellaneous needs.
h. Submit to the President for approval all
proposed events and programs.
i. Serve on the Nominating Committee.
j. Meet monthly with the Division
Administration with Vice Chair.
k. Communicate with campus parents.
l. Attend new parent orientation, start-of-
school receptions, and back-to-school
night, prepared to give brief comments at
each.
m. Compile list of possible projects to be
funded by the annual fund-raiser proceeds.
n. May delegate some responsibilities to
the Vice-Chair upon notification to the
President.
o. Write year-end report for submission to
Parent Association President and to pass on to incoming Campus Chair.

7. Campus Vice Chair (Lower School, Middle School, Upper School)
   a. Agree to serve as Chair-elect, filling in for Chair as necessary.
   b. Attend monthly School Committee meetings.
   c. Work with the Chair planning events and programs for the division.
   d. Meet monthly with the Division Administration with Chair.
   e. Serve as Parent News Representative.
   f. Serve on the Safe and Secure Council as campus representative.
   g. Write year-end report to pass on to incoming Campus Vice Chair.

8. Campus Secretary
   a. Record minutes of monthly meetings. Distribute them within the division and make them available electronically for web posting.
   b. Handle other correspondence as necessary.
   c. Write year-end report to pass on to incoming Campus Secretary.

These two officer descriptions are a good example of how differently schools approach the work of the parents’ association. The latter school clearly has a much bigger and more detailed operation, although both schools ask the parent volunteers to take on substantial roles within the community. A look at these different models suggests several questions for schools to bear in mind when considering the makeup of the officer of the parents’ association board. Some of these questions may be addressed in the bylaws, but they may be separately addressed in how the group works with the school to achieve various goals.

- What specific jobs within the work of the parents’ association should be overseen by an officer?
- What specific outputs in the ways of reports, budgets, and other organizational documents are expected of this group and who should either produce or oversee their production? Where are these documents housed within the school to ensure that they can be accessed and are not lost?
- Which roles within the parents’ association are ultimately responsible for fiscal and organizational oversight of the parents’ association and who are their logical point people within the school?
- How will succession work within this organization and who should be part of that progression?
- Are term limits appropriate? Parents’ association leadership term limits are also subject to variation between schools. Forty percent of schools have one-year term limits for parents’ association leaders (some renewable for a second year), Twenty-six percent have two-year limits, and much smaller percentages of schools have three-year terms, or “unlimited” terms. In many cases, heads note that the parents’ association vice-president serves as the president-elect for the association.

Parent Association Representative on the Board

Over the years, many schools have asked whether the school board of trustees should have a dedicated slot for a representative from the parents’ association. In some schools, this individual has always been the association president; in others, this individual has been elected either by the parents as a representative or by the parents’ association board. NAIS generally discourages holding such a “slot” open
because it does not allow the school’s board of trustees to determine the appropriate people for the skills it needs at the time, generally undercutting the notion of a self-determining and self-perpetuating board. In addition, a representational slot also implies to both the individual and the parents that he or she is somehow representing the group and should report back to the same. Both of these ideas move away from the general theme that board members for the school should be prioritizing the long-term interests of the institution and should not be involved with the day-to-day management of the school itself. That being said, schools with older parents’ associations often find that they have inherited this model and have made it work in some capacity.

Alternative approaches to having a dedicated board slot can be found at other schools. Some schools have chosen to create a parent liaison that might work with the development committee of the board and/or come to specific board meetings to report on the parents’ association work or participate in broader discussions about the way the parents’ association impacts the running of the school. Some schools have the parents’ association president fill this role; others have specifically appointed people from the parents’ association act as the conduit. Either way, most schools seem to find it helpful to have some form of relationship between the board and the parents’ association. Here is example language:

Parent rep:

5. Perform duties and responsibilities of a School Board of Trustees members as stated by the Board’s Governance Committee.
6. Write year-end report for submission to the Parent Association President to pass on to incoming Parent Representative to the Board of Trustees.

For schools wrestling with the issue of establishing a relationship between the board and the parents’ association, consider:

• What are you trying to achieve through parent association representation on the board?
• Can representation be achieved through other means such as having a percentage of school board members be parents, having parents’ association representatives work with a committee, or giving regular reports to the board?
• Could representation be achieved by having school board members serve on the parents’ association board in either voting or non-voting capacities?

Nominations and Elections

How complex your parents’ association nomination process is depends on the complexity of the association itself. However, schools should bear in mind, again, that this entity becomes one of the main avenues of parent communication and involvement with the school. Parents are likely to expect more transparency in the nomination and election process than they do from the school's board because the parents' association is more representative of what is happening at the school right now.
Nominations

Schools have two general approaches to nominations. In most cases, the nominating committee prepares a slate of candidates for approval by either the whole parents’ association board or the executive committee and that slate is brought to the meeting of the membership for approval. The way that the nominating committee receives the candidates can differ. In most schools, it appears that the nomination process is very open, with any suggestions of individuals being sent to a designated person on the nomination committee directly or submitted through some other form. In other schools, the nominating committee may bring a slate of candidates forward to the membership and members can nominate other individuals from the floor. Here is example language:

The Nominating Committee and Elections

1. In September, a Nominating Committee shall be appointed by the Chairman of the Parents’ Association and shall include the immediate past-Chairman who shall serve as Chairman of the Committee, the present Chairman, the First Vice-Chairman, the Second Vice-Chairman, and three other members, representative of the divisions of the school, who are present or past member of the Board. All officers, standing committee chairmen and their assistants, class parents, and members-at-large shall be chosen by the Nominating Committee. Representatives to any other school organization that calls for parent participation shall be nominated if so requested.

2. After obtaining the consent of the candidates to serve in the event they are elected to office, the Nominating Committee shall present the Slate of Proposed Officers, Chairman and Class Parents, to the Board four weeks before the Annual Meeting.

3. Any member of the Parents’ Association may add a candidate’s name to the slate upon written recommendation of the members of the Parents’ Association, placing it in the hands of the Nominating Committee at least one month before the Election of Board Members at the Annual Meeting.

4. At the Annual Meeting; the Chairman of the Nominating Committee shall report the proposed slate and voting shall take place by the entire membership present.

5. When only one nomination is made for an office, election may be by voice vote. If there is more than one nomination for office, the vote shall be in person by written ballot. The Chairman of the Parents’ Association shall appoint two tellers to collect the ballots, count, and report the results to the meeting.

6. Any vacancy among the Board may be filled for the balance of the unexpired term by the Chairman, with the approval of the Executive Committee.

At the April meeting of the general membership, the Nominating Committee’s slate approved by the Executive Committee shall be presented. Additional nominations may be submitted from the floor, provided that the consent of the nominee has been obtained. Election shall be by voice except when there is more than one candidate for a particular office, in which case, the vote shall be by secret ballot. The candidate receiving a majority of the votes cast shall be elected. If there are more than two candidates and no candidate receives a majority of the first ballot, there shall be a runoff between the top two candidates.

Or

Section A. Nomination of Officers

1. The Nominating Committee is responsible for recommending a slate of officers for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Committee shall consist of five current members of the Board who do not seek nomination or have not served on the previous year’s committee. The Committee shall select a Chair.

2. At the January Board Meeting, Board members interested in serving as a member of the Nominating Committee for that year shall so indicate by raising his or her hand. If there are more than five candidates interested in serving,
the Board will vote on the candidates at the January meeting. The five candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall constitute the Nominating Committee. In the case of tie votes, the Board will vote until the ties have been broken. If fewer than five candidates are interested, the most senior member of the Executive Board who is not seeking nomination shall appoint Board members to the vacant positions. If all current members of the Executive Committee seek nomination, the President shall appoint Board members to the vacant positions.

3. The slate shall be presented to the Board at a March Board meeting. The Board shall vote to forward the slate for a General Membership vote at the April Parent Association Meeting.

4. Notices of the election and the proposed slate of officers shall be distributed to the General Membership through the School email distribution list referred to as etrain and/or the issue of the Parents Association Newsletter prior to the April General Membership meeting. The notice shall outline the slate of officers approved at a March board meeting and state that the slate shall be presented to the General Membership for formal approval at the April Parent Association meeting.

Again, how nominations are achieved may relate to the school’s culture and how the school would like the parents’ association culture to develop. Important considerations are:

- Is it important for parents to feel that the nomination process permits input from all voices, suggesting an open nomination process?
- Will this process work better in your school with a more or less proscribed process? Some schools and their respective parent bodies do well with meeting more detailed notice and other requirements; others are less formal.
- Are there prerequisites to any of the officer or board positions that may require a volunteer to have certain kinds of skills, backgrounds, or time serving the parents’ association in different roles?
- Does the school board want to put a “stamp of approval” on the parent board nominations?

**Terms**

Schools do have a range of terms when it comes to parents’ association officer positions. Many schools seem to require only one-year terms, while others may require two, particularly for more technical positions, such as the treasurer role. The bylaws should specify how long the term is and whether there are any limits on the number of times an individual can hold an office.

**Proxies and Quorums for Elections**

If your school holds open elections, it is important to ensure that you can hold the election even if voter turnout is low. Schools may do this by permitting proxy or ballot voting, providing that the majority of those present and voting at the annual meeting constitutes an action by the membership, or some other means. However, it is important to address this issue because many schools have found over time that annual meeting attendance can vary wildly from year to year. In terms of how voting is done, as included in the language above, ballots are useful when two or more people are candidates for the same position. Schools should think through the most effective way to gather the votes, particularly if the bylaws are going to require a certain percentage of the membership to vote. The language below sets a quorum requirement for those present at the meeting and creates a two-thirds “supermajority” vote for the election of officers. Here is example language:

Election of officers for the succeeding year shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of those present at the April Annual Meeting.
Some schools address this issue in the election language within the bylaws; others choose to address it within the meeting language (see below). Often the issue is raised within the election language if this voting protocol differs from that of standard votes asked of the membership.

Schools looking at this issue should consider:

- Whether they really want all (or most) parents or guardians to participate in the vote, thereby suggesting that the school will want to go through the effort of proxy or ballot voting.
- Whether the school will make proxy or ballot voting available, but keep the voting requirement to a majority (or percent of a majority) of those present at the annual meeting.

**Committees**

Descriptions of committees in the parents’ association bylaws are different than those generally found in corporate bylaws. Most of the bylaws reviewed assumed that these committees would not be made up of parents’ association board members, but generally overseen by the parents’ association. As mentioned, schools may use the individuals chairing the committees as members of the parents’ association board, which is very practical in that it provides a direct reporting-in link. The committees tend to follow the work of the parents’ association and the volunteer needs of the school. Below are two examples. The first lists the current committees and gives a fair amount of latitude in altering the committee list and structure. The second is more proscribed and clearly defines the roles of the various committees.

The usual standing committees are: Admiral’s After Hours, After Prom, Bookstore, Community Service Advisory ... These committees may be added to, deleted, or changed as deemed appropriate or necessary by the Executive Board.

**Or**

Section D. Powers and Duties of Standing Committees

1. As indicated in Article II, Section A.1., there shall be Standing Committees, and the Chairperson of each shall serve on the Board.

2. Within the limitations of their respective budgets and powers, the Standing Committees and the duties of each shall be as follows:

   a. Bulldog Committee — The Bulldog Committee supports and promotes school spirit through athletics at the School.

   b. Community Service Committee — The Community Service Committee provides planning and logistical support to the School Community. The Committee works closely with the School, faculty, administration and community to plan and carry out meaningful and age-appropriate community service activities.

   c. Diversity Committee — The Diversity Committee recognizes and celebrates the cultural diversity of the School Community and strives to develop an understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

   d. Faculty and Staff Appreciation — The Faculty and Staff Appreciation Committee coordinates the faculty/staff appreciation days and plans special treats in the faculty lounges, reception area at Founders’ Hall, Kitchen, Motor Pool, and Gym.

   e. Fathers’ Committee — The Fathers’ Committee creates activities and events in which fathers (and/or significant parent figures) and students can participate together.

   f. Fine Arts Committee — The Fine Arts Committee promotes and supports cultural activities at the School in conjunction with the Fine Arts Department. Activities range from sponsoring performances by musicians, storytellers, choral/theater groups, dance troupes, and illustrations/
demonstrations by visual artists. This Committee may also be called upon to assist the Fine Arts Department with student theater, music productions, and art shows.

g. GALA Committee — The Gala Committee plans and manages the School’s largest annual fund-raiser, which raises monies for the School.

h. Library Committee — The Library Committee works to support the Library in a number of ways, including book fairs and the Fund-A-Book Program; and by coordinating Library Aides, when the librarians are absent for short periods during the day.

i. Parent Education Committee — The Parent Education Committee plans educational programs that address current issues of interest to parents.

j. New Parents’ Committee — The New Parents’ Committee supports the Administration during the recruitment and enrollment process; and welcomes and helps orient new families to the School community.

k. Newsletter Editor — The Editor is responsible for the publication of the monthly Parents’ Association Newsletter.

l. Parents’ Council Representative — The School is one of 50 independent schools in the metropolitan area belonging to the Parents Council of Washington. Member schools appoint parent representatives to attend Council meetings. The Council strives to foster communication among parents, students, and school communities through its programs and publications.

m. Volunteer/Special Events Coordinator — This coordinator organizes special events and activities, which shall occur during a school year, and organizes and assigns volunteers for those events. This position shall maintain and distribute a list of volunteers.

Again, the school will need to look at its original list of work that the parents’ association will take on in order to get a firm handle on the potential committees and structure that will help the parents’ association to do its work. Schools should remember, too, that the committees are not limited to board members in the parents’ association setting.

For schools that are thinking about which committees and how many, whether they are delineated in the bylaws or not, more survey data may be helpful. When asked, “Which of the following separate “committees” and/or leadership roles (or their equivalents) are part of your parents’ association structure?” heads replied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee or Leadership Roles as Part of Parents’ Association Structure</th>
<th>Answered “Yes” by Heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Representatives</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Representatives (Lower School)</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Booster Committee</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Booster Committee</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Appreciation</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auction/Gala Committee</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Programs Committee</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Committee</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Family Orientation/Hospitality Committee</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Healthy Choices” Committee (for substance-free events)</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Newsletter Coordinator</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House and Grounds Committee</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service Committee</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Fair Committee</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall/Spring “Festival” Committee</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education Committee</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meetings

Parents’ association bylaws generally speak to two kinds of meetings — those by the board and those by the general parents’ association membership. Schools may have as many, or as few, meetings as they wish. Many schools seem to create a minimum number of meetings (1-2 for the meetings of the members and monthly or less for the board). This is another section where quorum counts and voting minimums can be in play. Here is example language:

Section 1. The annual meeting of the organization shall be held on the second Tuesday of May each year. Annual reports shall be received and officers installed at the last meeting of the school year or with a vote of members at large through ballot.

Section 2. Meetings of the Parents’ Association Board shall generally be held on the second Tuesday of each month during the school year. The President may call special meetings. All meetings of the Parents’ Association Board shall be open to any member of the organization. A quorum shall consist of 50 percent of board members in attendance.

Or

Section 1. Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall meet no less than five times per year. A quorum shall consist of two-thirds of the members of the Board of Directors, but must include the President or at least one Vice-President. These meetings shall be open to all members of the Parents’ Association.

Section 2. Regular Meetings. The President shall call one Annual Meeting of the Parents’ Association in May or June. Special meetings may be called by the President or by the Parents’ Association Board of Directors as is deemed necessary for the purpose of receiving reports of Officers and Committees and for other business that may arise.

Section 3. Time, Place, and Notice of Meetings. The time and place of meetings shall be set by the President. Members shall receive notice of all meetings not less than one week before the date of the meeting. Notice may be given by email, regular mail, or any other form of communication reasonably calculated to provide notice.

Section 4. Voting. Each individual Member of the Parents’ Association shall be entitled to one vote. Unless otherwise specifically provided in these bylaws, all actions by the Association shall require the affirmative vote of the majority of Voting Members present at the meeting, either by voice or show of hands. Voting shall be by written ballot when it is deemed desirable by the Board of Directors or upon the request of 20 percent of the Voting Members present at the meeting.

Or

Section A. Meeting of the General Membership
At least two annual meetings shall be held that will be open to the full membership, one of which will be the April Meeting.

Section B. Board Meetings
1. The President shall call and hold monthly meetings of the Board as appropriate and additional meetings as the need arises.
2. Business transacted at any meeting of the Board shall be limited to the purposes stated in the notice of such meeting.
3. Votes taken during Board Meetings shall require a simple majority unless stated elsewhere in the bylaws.

Section C. Notice of Meetings
1. Notice of all General Membership meetings shall be in writing (Newsletter, email, and/or letter) and distributed at least 10 days, excluding school holidays, prior to the meeting).
2. Notice of regular board meetings shall be posted on the school calendar.
3. Notice of additional board meetings under Article III, Section B may be oral but shall be at least five days, excluding school holidays, prior to the meeting.
Section D. Quorum Requirements

1. A quorum for a properly called General Membership meeting shall consist of those present.
2. A quorum for the board meetings shall consist of a simple majority of the board members.

Money

The parents’ association should be part of the school administrative structure and not a standalone, separate corporate entity. As such, the parents’ association financial operations generally function under the umbrella of the school. This arrangement keeps the financials within the audit of the school. For this reason, schools should make sure that the checks and balances the school ultimately determines for the parents’ association allow for both efficiency and appropriate control to meet the review standards of the auditors. As an initial matter, most parents’ associations have an operating budget of some kind. This budget is generally approved by the school’s board as part of the yearly budget cycle and it contains the usual expenditures and credits that an operating division may have. However, the nature of the parents’ association activities raises a couple of key questions.

One of the main questions in this area revolves around writing checks. Although the approach may differ from school to school, generally, the school may determine that an individual within the parents’ association (usually the treasurer, but it might also include another officer or two, depending on the size and needs of the organization), should have the ability to write checks from the parents’ association bank account. This bank account should exist under the umbrella of the school’s overall bank account so that the school business office can still perform the bank reconciliation. Indeed, in order for this process to meet most auditor standards, the reconciliation will need to be performed by someone other than the check writer. Although this process will not be provided in the bylaws, the school will want to make sure that the back-end business process meets the checks and balances necessary for the business office. Even with this ability to write checks from the parents’ association account, schools may decide to limit this check-writing ability to those items approved within the parents’ association budget. See example language below.

Bank Accounts: All monies of the Association shall be held in a dedicated account managed by the School’s Director of Business and Finance. Deposits to the Parents’ Association account with the school shall be approved by the Association’s Finance Chair / Treasurer. Withdrawals and disbursements from the account with the School shall be approved by the appropriate Committee Chair, Finance Chair / Treasurer, so long as such disbursement is within the approved budget. If a disbursement exceeds the approved budget, then approval of the School’s Director of Business and Finance and the School’s Headmaster is required.

Or

All checks issued in the name of the Parents’ Association shall, unless otherwise provided by resolution of the Executive Board, be signed by the Treasurer, the President, or the School’s Director of Finance.

Or

Bank Accounts: The Association shall be entitled to maintain an account, the balance of which shall, at the beginning of the fiscal year, be budgeted to finance the Association’s activities on behalf of the School. All monies of the Association shall be held in a dedicated account managed by the School’s Business Manager. Deposits to this account with the School shall be approved by the Association’s Finance Chair. Withdrawals and disbursements from the Parents’ Association’s account with the School shall be approved by the appropriate Committee Chair and Treasurer, so long as such disbursement is within the approved budget. If a
disbursement exceeds the approved budget, then approval of the School's Business Manager and Headmaster is required.

The other key question that most schools wrestle with is what to do with the money that the parents' association raises. This is both a political and financial question. Many parents' association participants assume that because they raised the money, they must be able to decide how the money gets spent. Depending on the extent of the fund-raising done by the parents’ association, this may or may not be the school's policy. The recent financial crisis brought this issue to a head when schools suddenly faced a deficit year due to student withdrawals, needed more financial aid, or saw lower giving levels in other areas. This sudden deficit caused some schools to have to use money raised by parents’ associations for less glamorous items such as leaky roofs rather than for more visible outcomes, such as gym floors or smart boards. For parents’ associations that were accustomed to controlling the use of their fund-raised dollars, the school’s need to apply those funds elsewhere was both a surprise and a tough political conversation. Clarifying this issue within the bylaws is helpful to both the school and the parents’ association leadership. There can be room for flexibility here, as provided in sample language below.

An annual review of the financial records and accounts shall be performed by the Finance Chair/Treasurer and the School’s Director of Finance and Business within 30 days of the close of each fiscal year following the Annual Spring meeting. Upon completion of such review, all funds raised in excess of those required for the operating needs of the Association shall be donated to the School subject to a designation that is agreed upon by the Head of School and the Executive Board.

The net earnings from the Parents’ Association fund-raising activities shall be used for the benefit of the School for such purposes as the Board shall determine after consultation with the Headmaster as to the School’s needs.

Or
All funds raised by the School Parents’ Association shall be used for the support of the school or for the operational expenses of the association and be consistent with the rules and regulations applicable to the school, including with regards to its status as a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization.

For schools that are wondering how to pull this all together, here are two examples of sections addressing many of these fiscal issues and more:

Article X. Earnings
1. The net earnings of the Association shall not inure directly or indirectly to or for the benefit of any individual member.
2. The net earnings of the Association from fund-raising activities shall be used for the benefit of the School for such purposes as the Board shall determine after consultation with the Headmaster as to the School’s needs.
3. The Association shall be entitled to maintain an account, the balance of which shall, at the beginning of each fiscal year, be budgeted to finance the Association’s activities on behalf of the School.
4. At the end of each fiscal year, or as requested by the School, the Association will submit a report to the School in order to ensure that the Association’s assets are most advantageously employed, and that the Association has not engaged in any activity that would give rise to any federal tax liability.
5. The financial records of the Parents’ Association shall be submitted at the end of each fiscal year to the accountant of the School for tax preparation purposes. Tax returns for the Parents’ Association shall be signed and retained with the tax records of the School by the School-designated tax officer, the Business Manager of the School.
Funds of the Parents’ Association

Section 1. All funds of the Parents’ Association shall be held and managed by the School for the benefit of the Parents’ Association. The Parents’ Association funds will be held by the School in a special, segregated account labeled “Parents’ Association Account” (referred to herein as “Account”). The Parents’ Association shall turn over all funds and monies it received to the School for deposit and credit to the Account. The School shall hold and manage the Account free of charge, at no cost or expense to the Parents’ Association. The Account will be held at all times in a federal guaranteed institution with full deposit insurance coverage.

Section 2. The School will prepare and distribute to the President and Treasurer on a monthly basis a report (the Account Report), showing the beginning and ending balances and all deposits to and withdrawals from the Account. The President and Treasurer will promptly review and reconcile the Account Report. The President or Treasurer may question any item shown on the Account Report, and the School will work with the Parents’ Association to reconcile and resolve any disputed item. In addition, the School will provide such additional reports and information concerning the Account as the President or Treasurer may from time to time reasonably request.

Section 3. All disbursements from the Account will be made only with the approval of the President, President-Elect or Treasurer; provided, however, the approval of two of these three officers shall be required on all disbursements from the Account over five hundred dollars ($500.00).

Section 4. All disbursements from and deposits to the Account will be made in accordance with standard business office procedures of the business office, as such procedures may be amended or revised from time to time. The funds in the Account will be subject to independent audit in conjunction with the annual independent audit of the School.

Again, schools will want to consider a variety of questions when looking at their policies relating both to check-writing and use of the monies raised by the parents’ association. Here are some questions to get you thinking:

• Financial Checks and Balances
  – Is the school comfortable with volunteers writing checks? If so, which positions are appropriate for this responsibility?
  – How will the school ensure that the individuals with check-writing ability are worthy of the responsibility (e.g., upper limit on dollar amounts, financial background checks if done for similarly situated school employees, etc.)
  – Does the business office have a suggested approach to allow the efficiency of such check-writing authority while still maintaining appropriate control over reconciliation and fiscal management needs?
  – Do the auditors approve of the proposed solution?

• Designation of Raised Funds
  – Where should the money raised by the parents’ association be spent? Is the money raised substantial enough to need more than the parents’ association leadership to make a designation?
  – Can part of the money be for a use designated by the parents’ association?
  – Does the school’s board have any say in the use of the funds?
  – Can this decision be made in consultation with the head?
  – Do the board and parents’ association leadership make designation determinations at the beginning of the school year?
  – Do the funds automatically get deposited in the school’s other accounts?
Removals and Vacancies

Many schools include in their parents’ association bylaws the ability to fill a vacant slot, often without an election when the vacancy occurs during the year. The provisions are generally very straightforward, as seen in example language below.

Vacancies. Any vacancy in office because of death, resignation, or inability to serve, shall be filled by appointment of the Executive Board for the remaining portion of the term. However, should a vacancy occur in the office of the President, the President-Elect shall assume this office.

Or

Vacancies occurring on the Executive Board between elections at the Annual Meeting shall be filled by majority vote of the remaining members of the Executive Board.

A bit more controversial is the practice of removing members of the board. As is the case with many school bylaws, sometimes this removal can happen automatically for failure to fulfill certain basic requirements (attending a minimum number of meetings, etc.). These are sometimes considered resignations by default. Other removals can be behavior-related. Schools should be careful about these provisions as they are often a “nuclear” option in terms of the harmony of the working group.

While it is good to have the removal options available, they can be used as a result of political pressure against someone who is trying to get the parents’ association back in step with school administration. Schools should also note, too, that if the parents’ association is within the school, as opposed to its own legal entity, the school’s board maintains ultimate authority over the entity. In the event that a member of the parents’ association board is acting egregiously, the school's board may intervene, although should do so judiciously and cautiously. Resignations are also mentioned below. These situations tend to be more straightforward, as with an individual wishing not to serve in the near future. Schools may want to design practices to follow up with resigning individuals as a type of “exit” interview. Example language follows:

Removal from Office. Any board member with two unexcused absences in a fiscal year, who is derelict in his or her duties, engages in malfeasance, fails to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive board discussions, becomes unreasonably uncooperative, or prevents other board members from effectively performing their duties can be removed by the board by a vote of 2/3 or more of the board members then in office.

Resignation and Removal. Any officer may resign from the Executive Board at any time by giving written notice to the President or Secretary. Officers may be removed from office only by unanimous vote of the Executive Board.

Removal. An officer can be removed from office for failure to fulfill his or her duties, after reasonable notice, by a majority vote of the executive board.

Removal. Any officer or committee chair either elected or appointed may be removed by the Board of Directors whenever, in its judgment, the best interest of the Parents’ Association would be served.

Schools reviewing these sections should consider some of the following points:

- What will happen in the event of an officer vacancy?
- What will happen in the event of a non-officer vacancy?
- What steps should be taken if an individual would like to resign from the board or a key volunteer slot?
- Are there actions that may automatically trigger resignation or removal?
- What percentage of the oversight board of
the parents’ association should be able to remove another board member?

Amendments

Invariably, schools will find that something within the bylaws may need to be revisited at a later date. In fact, that is what many schools may be hoping to do when reviewing this publication. It is important to spell out in the bylaws how this might happen, particularly if the amendment requires input from the school’s board or other school leadership. Because this entity is likely operating under the authority of the school’s board, requiring approval from the board or the head of school, or both, is probably a good idea so that random amendments are not made and the school is not suddenly faced with a spin-off organization over which it has little to no control. The three examples below provide different versions of review by the school.

These Bylaws may only be amended by a duly authorized resolution of the School Board of Directors.

or

These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of those present at any regular business meeting or special meeting, provided the proposed changes have been submitted to the general membership at least three (3) days prior to the meeting and have been reviewed and approved by the Head of School.

Or

These bylaws of the Parents’ Association may be amended, repealed, or otherwise modified. Amendments to these bylaws must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees before being voted on by the Association. Written notification of a proposed amendment, repeal, or modification shall be given to all members of the Parents’ Association. The proposed amendment, repeal, or modification will be addressed at the first meeting after such notification. A quorum must be present at any vote to modify the bylaws, and a two-thirds majority of those present is required. Any amendment, repeal or other modification of these bylaws of the Parents’ Association must be in accordance with the bylaws of the School as adopted by the Board of Trustees and must be in accordance with all policies of the School as the same may be amended or modified from time to time.

How schools approach this section may depend on the complexity of the parents’ association structure in place, and whether there are sufficient other checks and balances to make amendments less of a concern. For example, if the head of school and a board member both serve on the parents’ association board, such check may not be as necessary as it would be if the parents’ association functioned largely independently. Things to think about here:

• What sort of votes, from which bodies, would be ideal? Should the parents’ association membership vote on this topic at all? Just the school board?
• What sort of notice requirements might be necessary to bring an amendment to a vote?
• What steps are necessary for the school’s board to make an amendment to the parents’ association bylaws?

CONCLUSION

Independent school parents’ associations are almost as varied as independent schools themselves. Schools creating or revisiting their parents’ association should review the points of strain and contention that can arise with these entities and create systems and processes designed to ameliorate their potential impact on the school. Parents’ associations can add so much to our independent school communities, particularly if they are created and nurtured thoughtfully and cohesively.
Please provide some basic information about your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Type (K-12, K-8)</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ed, Single Sex</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 72
skipped question: 3

In the mission/purpose statement for your school's parents' association (PA), please identify if the following aims (or overall concepts) are included: (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Orientation</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering for School Events</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering for “duties” (classroom help, school store, library, etc.)</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting a “positive spirit” within the school</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 59
skipped question: 16

In your PA bylaws, is there a statement that EXPLICITLY states the expectation that the association cooperate with the school administration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 57
skipped question: 18

Do your PA bylaws state what the organization is NOT, as well as what it is? For instance, “the parents’ association is not a lobbying organization or a forum for parent grievances...”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 57
skipped question: 18
### SURVEY RESULTS

#### Where is the Parents Association “situated” within your organizational structure?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a sub-committee reporting to the Board of Trustees</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an auxillary organization reporting to the school administration</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a free-standing, independent organization</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, or elaboration of above</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17

#### Does the individual who assumes the presidency of the parents’ association automatically have a role on the Board of Trustees?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, voting</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, ex officio</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but makes reports to the Board</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No contact with the Board</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17

#### Indicate which of the following groups of individuals are explicitly identified as members of the PA in the bylaws. (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current parents</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardians</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons standing “in place” of parents</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past parents</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17

#### Do parents need to pay “dues” to become members of your school’s PA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17
### Is the Head of School an ex officio member of the PA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 56
Skipped question: 19

### Does your school employ a Director of Parent Relations (or the equivalent)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, what is their official title, and is this a full or part-time position?</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 58
Skipped question: 17

### Does your PA have an Executive Committee?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 58
Skipped question: 17

### Please identify if your PA has the following “Officers”. Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 58
Skipped question: 17
### INDEPENDENT SCHOOL PARENTS’ ASSOCIATIONS

#### SURVEY RESULTS

**Which of the following are ex officio members of the Executive Committee?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Parent Relations</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Institutional Advancement</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 50  
skipped question: 25

**As a Head of School, how often do you meet with the PA leadership?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-weekly</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17

**What are the term limits for PA Officers?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two years</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three years</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No limits</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 58  
skipped question: 17
Which of the following separate “committees” and/or leadership roles (or their equivalents) are part of your PA structure? Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
<td>95.8%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominating Committee</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Representatives</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Representatives (Lower School)</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Booster Committee</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Booster Committee</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Appreciation</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auction/Gala Committee</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Programs Committee</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Committee</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Family Orientation/Hospitality Committee</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Healthy Choices” Committee (for substance-free events)</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Newsletter Coordinator</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House and Grounds Committee</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service Committee</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Fair Committee</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall/Spring “Festival” Committee</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Education Committee</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 48
skipped question: 27

How is your school’s PA’s bank account structured?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a sub-account of the school</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a separate account, supervised by the PA</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, or elaboration of above</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 55
skipped question: 20
Who approves PA expenditures? Check all that apply, and please note if expenditures above a certain amount require additional approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA President</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Treasurer</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Manager/CFO</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, or elaboration of above</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 55
skipped question: 20

Are your PA’s expenditures subject to the school’s accounting policies, and audited by the school’s auditor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, or elaboration of above</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 55
skipped question: 20

Do your PA bylaws explicitly state that the earnings from PA activities shall be used for the direct benefit of the school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 54
skipped question: 21

Does your PA formally present their annual budget to the school each year?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, or elaboration of above</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question: 55
skipped question: 20
### Overall, how well do you feel the PA’s finances in your school are managed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Well</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactorily</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Poorly</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 55  
Skipped question: 20

### How would you currently rate the overall school relationship with the PA?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very positive</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Negative</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 61  
Skipped question: 14

### How would you rate the quality of the relationship of your parents’ association with the following constituencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development/Advancement Office</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wider Parent Body (non-PA types)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 56  
Skipped question: 19

### In your school, how would you rate the impact of the Parents Association on the life of the school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Positive Impact</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impact</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Negative Impact</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered question: 59  
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John A. Lewis became headmaster of The Gunston School (Maryland) in 2010. Before coming to Gunston, Lewis was at the Ranney School (New Jersey), where he served as English department chair, director of studies, and head of upper school. He has also served as a head of grade at the United World College of Southeast Asia in Singapore, and taught English and philosophy. He was one of the founding faculty members of the Colegio Menor San Francisco de Quito, an independent school in Ecuador. He began his career as a faculty intern at Culver Academies.

Lewis holds an A.B. in English from Georgetown University, where he was a Lannan Fellow. He earned an Ed.M. in teaching and learning from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and an M.A. in private school leadership from the Klingenstein Program at Teachers College, Columbia University.

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Prior to coming to NAIS in August 2000, Wilson was in the Attorney General’s Honors Program as a trial attorney for the Tax Division at the Department of Justice. She holds a B.A. in English literature from the University of the South, most commonly known as Sewanee, and a J.D. from the University of South Carolina School of Law. She is also an alumna of the Williams School in New London, Connecticut.