



Governing Schools Towards Excellence



THE CHAIRPERSON

WHO DOES WHAT

We are committed to provide functional and modern schools that enable quality teaching and learning to protect and promote the right of every learner to quality, equitable and relevant education.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

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Unit 2: The Chairperson



Learning Outcomes

By the end of the Unit you should be able to:

- Know what is expected from you as the Chairman
- How to prepare for and run effective meetings
- Deal with difficult people
- Know how decisions are taken at meetings

The Chairperson plays an important role in making sure good governance happens in schools. They need to ensure that the governing body is:

- Promoting the best interest of the school; and
- The school is providing quality education to all learners at the school

The law says ...

The chairperson

- Must be a parent
- Must be elected
- Must not be employed at the school



Do's

All Office-bearers cannot serve for more than 1 year without re-election.

What can we expect from them?

The Chairperson must:

- Maintain regular contact with the principal;
- Develop a good working relationship with the principal;
- Provide leadership to the governing body and the school (effective and efficient meetings and good working relationships with all members);
- Take responsibility for directing the activities of office bearers;
- Schedule and manage meetings;
- Develop the agenda (with input from members);
- Chair the SGB meetings: welcome, follow the agenda, ensure voting occurs as per procedures, making sure the meeting adheres to the code of conduct (fair and inclusive), and notes the decisions and action points clearly for the secretary.

Skills

The chairperson must:

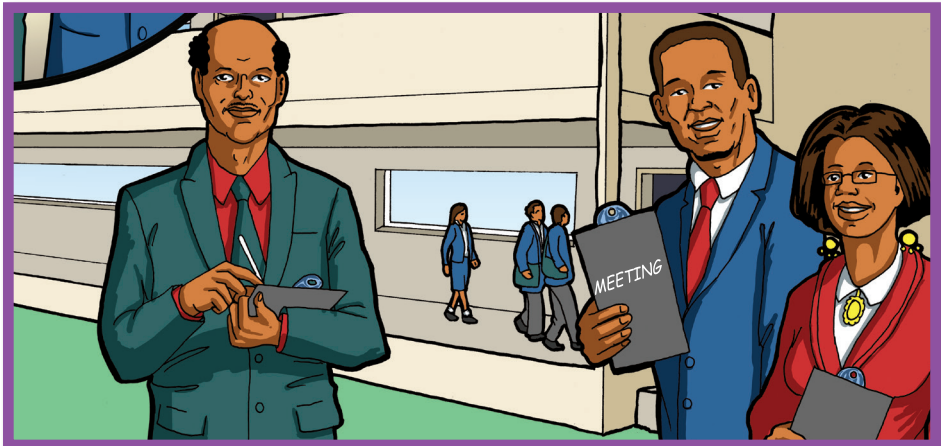
- be organised, responsible and reliable;
- good at timekeeping;
- be fair;
- attend all SGB meetings;
- represent the governing body to external stakeholders;
- build and maintain relationships with people outside the school; and
- be committed to education.



We ensure that the school properties are not abused. We also have a policy of allowing the community to use the school property such as the school hall to be used as a church every Sunday. They pay the school and through that means, we raise some funds for the school.



- Develop a 3 year Plan (Covered in the Booklet 'Getting Things Done')
- Monitor the Curriculum (Covered in the module 'The core business of the school: teaching and learning').
- Meet the principal regularly, perhaps once a week.



How to plan for and run an effective meeting



Before

Prepare agenda with secretary
Check that all are notified



During

Follow meeting protocol
Ensure decision making
Manage time and discussions
Deal with difficult people



After

Check the draft minutes
Ensure that the minutes are sent out
Ask the secretary to follow up on tasks

Before: Planning a meeting

The chairperson and secretary are usually the people who plan a meeting. Good planning helps to ensure that everyone sticks to the main topic of the meeting.

Planning should include the following:

Step 1: Preparing the agenda

The chairperson and secretary draw this up. List the points that will be discussed at the meeting, taken from the Matters Arising of the previous meeting. The decisions made then should now be reported upon.

Step 2: Prioritising issues

The agenda is a list of the most important issues for the members to discuss, arranged in order of priority. The chairperson should check the minutes of the previous meeting in order to have a clear memory of the issues raised. The matters arising from these minutes will be based on this and may include the following:

Tasks: these require a report-back

- Matters for which further information was required
- Matters that were deferred to this meeting

Step 3: Planning the timing

It's important to decide:

- When? The meeting begins and ends
- How much? Time to allocate for each agenda item, in order of priority.
- How many? People will need to speak and for how long.

Step 4: All the relevant people should be notified

They must be informed of the date, time and venue of the meeting, as well as the agenda. This is a job for the secretary. Some organisations have their meetings on the same day and time every month, so it is easy for everyone to remember.



Tips

Draft a standard agenda for meetings (and allocate times to guide those who are reporting) (Covered in the secretary's unit in this Handbook)



See the Schedule and Agenda Templates.

During the meeting

Running meetings – an important role of the chairperson

The chairperson plays an important role in meetings.

They must set the pace for the meeting, making sure that people stick to the topics and that democratic decisions are taken.

It is through meetings that many of the SGB decisions are made.



A good chairperson actively manages the meeting:

| Meeting terminology | |
|---------------------|--|
| Resolution | A formal decision that is agreed upon |
| Motion | A formal proposal for people to consider |
| Floor | A person who is at the meeting but not part of a committee |

Delegates tasks

What, when,
resources,
reporting

Makes sure

everyone is
involved in
making decisions

Guides

discussion

Gets agreement

on decisions

Gives everyone

chance to speak

When opposing views are expressed, the chairperson should try to:

- summarise the different positions (without repeating what has been said);
- propose a way forward.

This might involve:

- taking a vote
- having a further discussion at a future date or
- making a compromise.

The Chair needs to make sure to keep the meeting on track and stick to the agenda.

Their role is to:

- **Open the meeting**, welcome everyone.
- **Set a time** when everyone agrees that the meeting should end. This encourages people to be brief.



Tips

Allocate time for agenda items before the meeting and indicate this on the notice going out to members. At the meeting remind everyone of the time allocations.

- Present the **agenda**.
- **Those present and apologies:** Members who were not able to attend are noted

and recorded in the minutes. If there are too many people to note them all, an attendance register can be circulated for everyone to sign.

- **The minutes:** These are notes about what was discussed at the last meeting, circulated earlier. The minutes are adopted (accepted) at the beginning of the meeting, when everyone agrees that they are a true reflection of what happened last time. Members can suggest changes or additions, where something has been left out. Minutes should list actions and task responsibility must be tracked.
- **Matters arising from the minutes:** At the last meeting someone might have been delegated to do some work, on which they should report back. Or there might have been new developments which should be discussed at this meeting. A list of these points is drawn from the previous meeting's minutes.
- **Other items on the agenda:** These are introduced in turn. For each one, there will be a discussion and proposals, or a report-back to decide if the outcome was satisfactory. The aim is to examine the issue in more detail, get everyone's opinion on it and arrive at a decision.
- **Correspondence:** Letters or other communications that have been received since the last meeting. They could be read aloud at the meeting and discussed, or the secretary could list them, and give a brief explanation of their contents.
- Ensure that the **date** for the **next meeting** is confirmed / set at the meeting.

How decisions are taken at meetings

Decisions are usually reached through consensus or through voting:

- **Consensus** means reaching a decision through discussion and general agreement.
- **Voting** means that the members vote on a proposal. One person will second it, and then everyone will vote. If the majority accepts the decision, it becomes the legal option: Voting can be done by a show of hands or by a secret ballot.



- **Show of hand:** Necessary when there is disagreement. The chairperson will ask them to raise their hands to show their support for a proposal. The majority vote decides if the proposal stands or falls away.
- **Secret ballot:** Each member writes on a piece of paper whether or not they support the proposal. The votes are then counted to see whether the proposal stands or not.



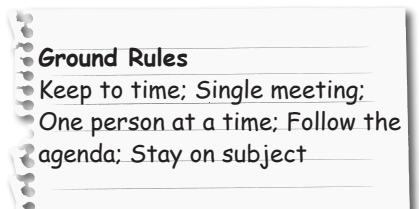
Consensus is usually a better way to decide on an issue than voting. If consensus is reached it is usually because members have compromised, so they feel more committed to the decision. Resolutions are formal proposals that are put forward to the meeting, voted on and passed by the members, so that they become policy.

Dealing with difficult people at meetings

- **Get the group to agree on ground rules** about how the meeting will be conducted.

Typical ground rules might include:

- The meeting will start and end on time
- There is only one meeting -- no side conversations
- One person talks at a time
- Stay on the subject - follow the agenda.



Ground rules are useful because they are neutral. Display them on the wall so the chairperson or anyone else in the meeting can refer to them whenever someone's disruptive behaviour is threatening to throw the meeting off course.

- A prioritised agenda is also a useful tool. When drawing up an agenda, identify the most important items and place them first, with an estimated time allocation. Place less important items lower down. A prioritised agenda forces everyone to think about what is really important, and to stay on track.

If behaviour is still disruptive, they must be treated with a combination of assertiveness and tact. The goal is to preserve the integrity of the meeting, not to claim a victory over those who are causing the problems.



'All talk, no action'

The person elected as the secretary of an SGB is dynamic and charismatic. She is a lively participant at meetings, and promises to undertake many tasks. Unfortunately, it seems that she is all talk and no action. Although she always has an excuse, charmingly uttered, the minutes are never captured and distributed. This means that SGB members are also failing to complete their tasks. Soon, the SGB becomes dysfunctional. The principal thinks about this and concludes that a loud voice is not all that is required for success.

This is potentially a very negative situation. How should the chairman deal with this person?

After the meeting

The following is important for the Chairperson after the meeting:

- Check the draft minutes are correct (as supplied by the Secretary)
- Ensure that the minutes are sent out to members
- Ask the secretary to follow up on tasks (use the minutes to assist with this)



See the Minutes Template

Chairperson's Checklist

How to be sure that you are attending to all your tasks

This checklist can assist you in planning for your role as Chairperson. It can also assist you in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your performance in this role. It is intended to assist you in ensuring that nothing 'falls through the cracks'.



Physical Address:

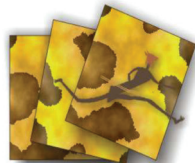
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