Parents' Clubs

The value of Parents' Clubs

Parents' clubs undertake valuable work by promoting the welfare of and supporting the school and its community. Strong and positive relationships between schools and families demonstrate to the child that everyone is working together in their best interest.

Parents' clubs have continued to make important contributions to their school communities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and we would like to thank parents' clubs who have shown adaptability and embraced new technologies to maintain connections with parents, students, and school staff during these unprecedented times.

While it is important that parents' clubs talk to their school principal to understand what activities would be most useful for their school community, the activities below provide examples of the contributions they can make, noting that there is no obligation for parents' clubs to undertake fundraising activities.

1. Encouraging parents to connect with each other such as by organising: • a 'buddy' system to ensure parents have someone to talk to especially during periods of social distancing • parent book club • coffee catch ups • online and in person group exercise and meditation classes	**2. Providing parents' views to the school leadership about:** • school policies that have been identified by the school for review, such as anti-bullying, student engagement and wellbeing, codes of behaviour, etc.
3. Contributing to the school newsletter about: • ways in which parents' can support their children's learning in both an in person and online environment • ideas for activities for the weekends and non-school times to keep their children engaged • ideas to support parents' working from home	**4. Participating in discussion, plans and activities for events such as:** • welcoming new students and parents to the school • second-hand book and uniform schemes • social opportunities such as Father's Day breakfast, Mother's Day high tea • comedy or movie nights • twilight markets • bush dances • barbeques
5. Promoting cultural and social diversity by: • encouraging membership and participation of all parents in parents' clubs	**6. Raising funds for the school with the prior approval of the school council for example to:** • install shade sails • upgrade library books or computers

Tips for online meetings

During COVID-19, parents' clubs have needed to adapt the way they operate in order to ensure they are meeting social distancing and self-isolation requirements. It is important to note that the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017*, the Department's Parent's Club Policy, and the Model Constitution continues to apply for all parents' club activities, including remotely held meetings.

If parents' clubs are unable to meet in person, they can use telephone or video conferencing software to conduct meetings. This includes the first meeting to form a parents' club and adopt the Model Constitution, elect office bearers, and conduct general business. When hosting online meetings, parents' clubs are still required to have quorum to make valid decisions and members must attend either by video or telephone.

Software:

- Webex is the Department's preferred video conferencing software. You can download and install Webex software for free on your computer, phone or tablet from webex.com/downloads.html
- Instructions on how to host a Webex meeting can be found at Video Conferencing - Get Started with Webex Meetings for Hosts
- Parents' clubs are not required to use Webex, other platforms can be used, however it is important that the chosen platform is accessible and free to allow all members to participate.

Before the Meeting	During the Meeting	Post Meeting
• It is important to be clear on the role of the President and other members. • Be clear on what you have to do to prepare – make sure everyone has the equipment they require, that it is working and that they know how to use it. • Formulate an appropriate agenda. Touch base with the participants via group or individual email to get agenda items. • Ensure any pre-meeting reading is distributed at least 5 working days before meetings.	• If the Chair (President) intends to record the meeting, they should notify all attendees and seek their agreement prior to recording. • Attendees should use a headset if possible, to minimise background noise. • Attendees should be on mute when not speaking. • Attendees should allow the host to manage the meeting. • The Chair should establish ways for everyone to participate, for example attendees can raise their hand if they want to speak or use the chat feature. • For each agenda item, the Chair should ask participants in turn to speak and check if there are any further questions at the end • If the quality of the video conference is poor, turn off video and continue with audio only.	• Ensure minutes are circulated. • Follow up any questions/actions. • De-brief with people you feel may not have contributed because they were uncomfortable with the format/platform. • Communicate relevant items to the wider school community via school newsletter or online platform/s.

Connection Success Stories – Laburnum Primary School

Laburnum Primary School recently shared how they have succeeded in their efforts to maintain connections with their school community during what has been a very challenging time for students, families and schools. Their parents' group has worked hard to build and maintain a strong sense of community via social events and fundraising during the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic. Whilst they were unable to hold many of their planned social events, they embraced internet apps like Zoom to run successful online events for Laburnum families.

One example is how they helped organise whole-school **virtual discos** for students and families to come together and enjoy an evening with fun, laughter, dance and music. This event saw a big number of smiling, happy faces, enjoying themselves with their friends online.

The Laburnum Primary parents' group, with the help of their school leadership, has been successful in engaging their school community with free out-of-the-box events and are continually endeavouring to maintain and nurture a strong and vibrant community at Laburnum Primary School.

More fun and free ideas to stay connected online:

Group Meditation and Exercise

- Organise a group exercise or meditation session, you can find online physical activity resources including free workout videos at vichealth.vic.gov.au

Book Club

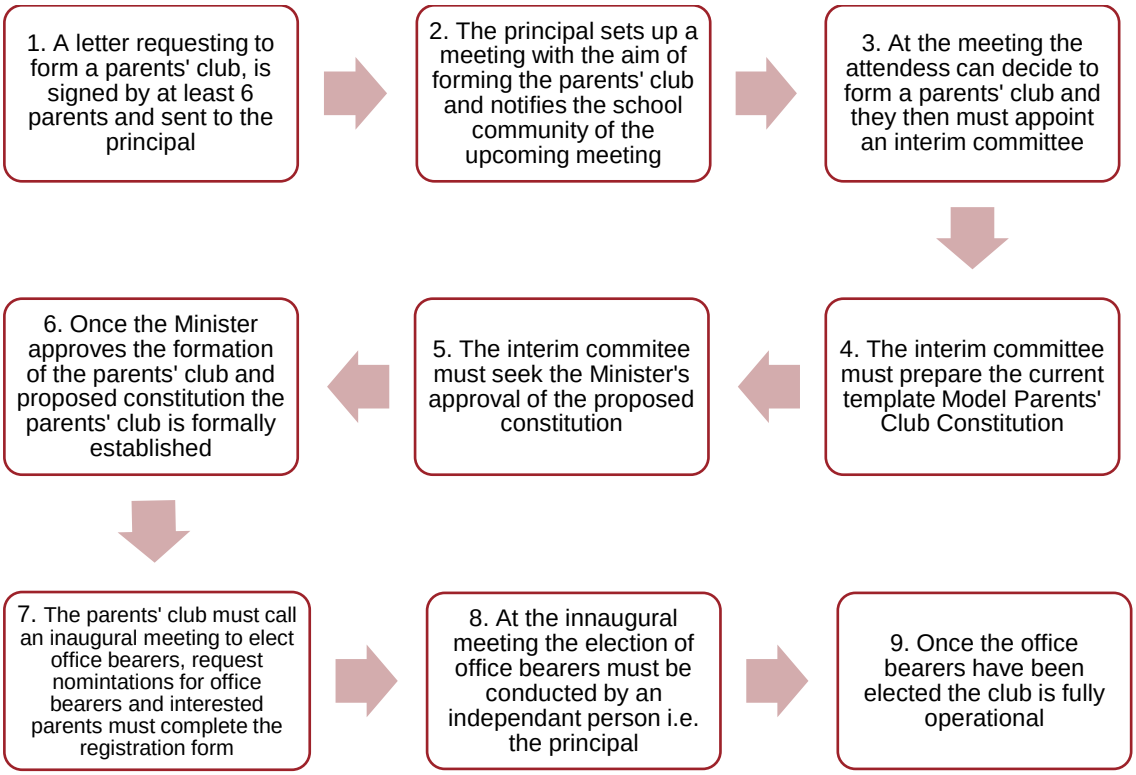
- Organise a regular online catch up to discuss books selected by the group

Cooking Class

- Host an online cooking tutorial and have families watch or cook along with you

How to establish a Parents' Club

If there is interest in establishing a parents' club at a school, there is a formal process that must be followed. The requirements for forming and running parents' clubs are set out in the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 and in Department policy. The below diagram shows a simplified version of the steps to establish a parents' club. Detailed instructions are available in the Policy and Advisory Library.



Current Parents' Club Constitution

All parents' clubs need to ensure that they have adopted the current Model Parents' Club Constitution.

The Model sets out parents' clubs' procedures and other requirements, including membership, election of office bearers, meetings, voting requirements, records management, finance, conflict of interest and privacy requirements

Any parents' club which has not yet adopted the Model (as published by the Secretary of the Department in May 2019) must do so in order to be recognised as a Victorian government school parent's club under the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017.

Principals should ensure parents' clubs know to put the adoption of the constitution on the agenda for their next General Meeting.

What parents' clubs need to do next to adopt the Parents' Club Model Constitution

1. Adoption of the constitution should be placed on the agenda for the next General Meeting of the parents' club.

2. The parents' club must complete the template Model Parents' Club Constitution. To do this, they can use the Instruction Sheet or follow the instructions in the Policy and Advisory Library.
3. Once the constitution has been prepared, it must be sent in Word format, by the parents' club or the school principal to community.stakeholders@education.vic.gov.au for approval by the Minister of Education's delegate. Note it is recommended that the parents' club president and school principal are included in the submission email.

Inactive clubs

Over past years, clubs may have taken a recess and therefore been inactive. If a club is inactive but not dissolved (i.e., has not undergone the dissolution process outlined in the Regulations), its status is 'inactive' or 'on hiatus'. Should a club wish to become active again, it is not required to undertake the formation process again, but should work with the school's principal to re-establish club activities. Clubs should also ensure they are operating under the current Model Constitution, as published by the Department Secretary.

Working together

It is important to establish and maintain a cooperative working relationship between parents' clubs and school principals. The following actions may help to contribute to a positive relationship between parents' clubs and school principals:

Principals	Parents' Clubs
• Provide feedback to parents' clubs when they are planning social, educational, or fundraising activities • Utilise the parents' club as a reliable mechanism for parent feedback on school policy and initiatives, to assist in school decision-making	• Contribute to discussions about a wide range of issues relating to broader general education and student welfare matters • Provide feedback on school policy and initiatives, to assist in school decision-making
Together	
• Set up regular meetings to allow for updates and discussions between parents' clubs and principals	

Where to find out more

To assist parents' clubs the Department has a range of support materials available:

- Template Model Parents' Club Constitution
- Model Constitution Instruction Sheet
- Guide to the Model Parent's Club Constitution
- Policy and Advisory Library – club constitution and operational guidance.
- Parents' Clubs frequently asked finance questions

For any further support in updating your school's parents' club constitution, please email: community.stakeholders@education.vic.gov.au

Alternatively, schools can contact Parents Victoria, a state-wide organisation representing parents of students in Victorian government schools by email: office@parentsvictoria.asn.au or by visiting their website: www.parentsvictoria.asn.au