
Parent Council
Rudolf Steiner School of Ann Arbor

Charter

Approved by consensus May 6, 2006

This version revised & approved
September 2009

“Where all parent work is Parent Council work!”

Introduction

In Spring 05, the school held “Coffee and Conversation” Saturday morning sessions that began as a way to have open dialogue between parents, faculty, administration and Board.

During those informal gatherings, a theme kept emerging, asking the questions: “Where does a parent do his or her work at the school? Where is a parent’s place at the school if he or she never intends to become a teacher or Board member?” It became clear that there was a need for a parent organization.

A group of individuals committed their time and energy to meet from Summer 05 through Spring 06 to bring to form the parent organ of our school community’s body. They have opened the process up to the entire RSSAA community – attending faculty and Board meetings, holding numerous forums, and opening channels of communication to gather several rounds of input from parents, Board, faculty and administration. These efforts facilitated the creation of a Parent Council Charter.

The goal was to build a sustainable structure created by many hearts, hands and voices, with clarity of purpose, roles and processes that could be amended over time. The Charter is a living document that can be shaped and reshaped as we live and learn.

Though the initial form may seem a bit “formal,” **the underlying intention is simply to build stronger relationships**, better understand each other’s needs and share information. The Parent Council will provide a place for parents to support each other, support the work of the faculty and curriculum, make better use of energy and talents to get things done, and provide clearer channels of communication between parents, faculty, Board and administration.

Table of Contents

RSSAA Parent Council Charter

I. Mission	1
II. Goals	1
III. Parent Council Structure	1
Monthly Meetings	1
Annual Process	1
Roles	2
Parents	2
Parent Council Class Representatives	2
Parent Council Committee Liaisons	3
Parent Council Organizing Team	4
Facilitator	
Scribe	
Communicator	
Host	
Parent Council Coordinators	6
“Heads” Committee Coordinator	
“Heart” Committee Coordinator	
“Hands” Committee Coordinator	
RSSAA Faculty and Administrative Contact to Parent Council	7
IV. Processes	7
Ideas and Initiatives	
Decision Making Process	
Existing Processes & Roles	
Appendices	
Appendix A: Written Proposal Guidelines	
Appendix B: Consensus Decision-Making Process	
Appendix C: <i>“Waldorf Education: Schooling Head, Hands and Heart”</i> by Ronald E. Koetzsch	
Appendix D: Agenda Template	

Parent Council Charter

I. Mission

The Parent Council works together with the Board of Trustees, faculty and administration to help create a thriving, cohesive community. Collectively, we reach out to the greater community to support the growth and potential of our school, guided by the principles of Waldorf Education.

II. Goals

- Facilitate communication and cultivate open dialogue amongst parents, administration, faculty and Board
- Contribute to a positive and supportive learning environment for students and adults alike
- Inspire and support parent and community participation and initiative
- Maximize representation and collaboration amongst members with diverse perspectives and backgrounds (e.g., diverse racial and religious backgrounds, fathers, working parents)
- Create a stronger link and build a deeper sense of community between the Lower School and the High School
- Support and reinforce the existing processes established at RSSAA for addressing parent concerns, and the stated mission of RSSAA (see Appendix D)

III. Parent Council Structure

The Parent Council is open to all parents at the school. Upon joining the school, parents are:

- Automatically members of the Parent Council
- Welcome to attend all Parent Council meetings
- Invited to access various volunteer opportunities (as outlined in the Parent Handbook)
- Eligible to serve as a Parent Council representative, liaison or coordinator – or all three. These are not mutually exclusive roles

A. Monthly Meetings

The purpose of the monthly Parent Council meetings is to build community and identify common themes.

What happens at each meeting?

- Committee liaisons report on progress and need for support
- Parent Council representatives report on issues and activities relevant to the work of the Parent Council
- All work together to clarify needs, discuss and consider proposals, and volunteer to take necessary actions
- Participants track and monitor success of specific agreed-to actions and their results

Who comes to meetings?

- Class Representatives
- Parent Council Liaisons to RSSAA committees (see page 5)
- Parent Council Coordinators (Scribe, Facilitator, Communicator)
- RSSAA Contacts to Parent Council (Faculty, Administration)
- All meetings are open to all parents, Board of Trustees, Faculty and Administration

B. Annual Process: March through May

- March – letters are sent out to entire community inviting those who may be willing to serve on the Parent Council
- May – orientation of new representatives, list of new volunteers is announced, published in the Weekly Announcements. Incoming **and** outgoing volunteers attend May meetings.

C. Roles

There are five main categories of involvement (see below for descriptions):

1. Parent
2. Parent Council Class Representative
3. Parent Council Committee Liaison
4. Parent Council Organizing Team
5. Parent Council Coordinators: “Heads” “Heart” “Hands” Committees
6. RSSAA Faculty and Administrative Contact to Parent Council

1. PARENTS

Members

All parents at RSSAA are automatically members of the Parent Council.

Role

To stay informed and engaged to support the work of the Parent Council.

Responsibilities

- Read all announcements, agendas and minutes from Parent Council meetings
- Know the names of representatives, liaisons and coordinator
- Contact your class representative with ideas, questions or concerns about Parent Council
- Contact the appropriate liaison if you have feedback or ideas for that particular committee
- Consider taking on the role of representative, liaison or coordinator

2. PARENT COUNCIL CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

Members

Total 15 members – 11 Lower School and 4 High School (one from each class).
May have designated volunteer back-up representatives to sit in on meetings as necessary.

Role

Facilitate communication between class and Parent Council.

Responsibilities

- Attend all class and Parent Council meetings
- Get to know and listen to parents and children in class
- Help clarify existing processes as issues arise (reference Parent Handbook)
- Communicate relevant ideas and concerns at Parent Council meetings
- Communicate the discussions/decisions from Parent Council meetings with class
- Help recruit volunteer energy for RSSAA community events as requested

Skills and Experience

Has a willingness to represent the ideas and perspectives of families from the classroom, and has a general understanding of RSSAA’s philosophy (as outlined in the brochure, “Waldorf Education: Schooling Head, Hands and Heart” by Ronald E. Koetzsch).

Term – One year (May through May - renewable)


Process for taking on a volunteer role

1. Letters will go out to all parents in March announcing the opportunity to serve as a volunteer.
2. Interested parents will contact the current volunteer to let them know of their interest.
3. The current contact will set up a meeting with all parents who have indicated a willingness to serve in order to discuss the school’s philosophy and the specific role, responsibilities, time commitment and key skills required.
4. The new Parent Council reps will be introduced at the May Parent Council meeting and given orientation and binder.

3. PARENT COUNCIL COMMITTEE LIAISONS

Members

These liaisons will work with existing RSSAA committees.

PARENT COUNCIL LIAISONS link with existing RSSAA committees and leadership  <i>Attend meetings, support the work of the committee, provide cross-communication and help coordinate volunteer efforts for the following:</i>	RSSAA Committees and Leadership
1. BOARD OF TRUSTEES	Board of Trustees
2. FESTIVALS	FACULTY • Festivals Committee
3. OUTREACH (internal and external) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open houses, Tours and Intro Evenings • Lectures, Art Shows and Music • Advertising • Parent-initiated parent/tot groups • Faculty-led Parent Education evenings • Special Projects (i.e., 25th Anniversary Gala) • “In Harmony” diversity group 	FACULTY & ADMINISTRATION • Outreach Committee
4. ADMINISTRATION/COMMUNICATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements • Newsletter • Bulletin Boards • Library • AWSNA communications 	ADMINISTRATION • Front Office

PARENT COUNCIL LIAISONS link with existing RSSAA committees and leadership (continued)	RSSAA Committees and Leadership
5. DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build donor base and income streams • Fundraising: Annual giving campaign, Holiday Bazaar, Spring Auction, Scrip, School Store 	DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Committee
6. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS	ADMINISTRATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buildings and Grounds Committee
7. MOVEMENT	FACULTY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement Committee

Role

To work closely with their respective RSSAA leadership or committee to better accomplish its goals, provide a parent’s perspective and presence, and communicate key messages at Parent Council meetings.

Responsibilities

- Attend Parent Council meetings as necessary
- Serve as point person or contact person for all parents who have ideas, initiatives and concerns for respective committee
- Assist the committee and help recruit volunteers as necessary
- Communicate parents’ suggestions, ideas and initiatives to committee
- Meet with other liaisons to facilitate and coordinate volunteer efforts and improve communication

Skills and Experience

Has a willingness to represent the ideas and perspectives of families from the classroom, and has a general understanding of RSSAA’s philosophy (as outlined in the brochure, “Waldorf Education: Schooling Head, Hands and Heart” by Ronald E. Koetzsch, [Appendix C]).

Term – One year (May through May)

Process for taking on a volunteer role

1. Letters will go out to all parents in March announcing the opportunity to serve as a volunteer.
2. Interested parents will contact the current volunteer to let them know of their interest.
3. The current contact will set up a meeting with all parents who have indicated a willingness to serve in order to discuss the school’s philosophy and the specific role, responsibilities, time commitment and key skills required.
4. The new Parent Council reps will be introduced at the May Parent Council meeting and given orientation and binder.

4. PARENT COUNCIL ORGANIZING TEAM

Roles

1. **Facilitator**
2. **Scribe**
3. **Communicator**
4. **Host**

Intention

To work together with parents, faculty, administration and staff to build a stronger, more cohesive community and help create a consistent and transparent process for Parent Council meetings and communications.

Responsibilities (work as a team to):

- Attend Parent Council meetings
- Receive suggested agenda items and propose draft agenda
- Set meeting dates/times
- Facilitate mission and goals of Parent Council
- Reinforce existing agreed-to processes
- Coordinate the annual role renewal process (March, April, May)
- Hold the intention that all positions are filled

Skills, Experience and Responsibilities

1. **Facilitator**

Has experience in working with groups, building trust and creating clear, transparent, open processes and communication. Helps establish common ground and strengthen relationships (specifically in consensus decision making). Specific skills include:

- Agenda planning
- Meeting facilitation
- Consensus decision-making

2. **Scribe**

Helps create a standardized process and consistency in messages. Strong listening, writing, summarizing and synthesizing skills are important. Scribe works together with Facilitator and Communicator to help create draft agendas and resolve conflict.

- Creates and distributes draft meeting agendas
- Takes minutes and decision log at monthly Parent Council Meetings – or find backup
- Posts draft minutes for review before creating final draft
- Revises minutes to create final draft
- Sends minutes to Coordinator who disseminates minutes to all Parent Council Reps and front offices.

3. **Communicator**

Works with Facilitator and Scribe to create open communication structures so that everyone has access to the same information.

- Maintains database of email addresses
- Responsible for providing Parent Council items for bulletin board (front offices post hard copy of meeting minutes and all other relevant information)
- Posts to Weekly Announcements:
 - Monthly minutes
 - Next meeting agenda

4. **Host**

Provides light refreshment, makes sure signs are put out in conjunction with front office staff. Ensures the group has a meeting space.

Term – One year (May through May)

Process for taking on a volunteer role

1. Letters will go out to all parents in March announcing the opportunity to serve as a volunteer.
2. Interested parents will contact the current volunteer to let them know of their interest.
3. The current contact will set up a meeting with all parents who have indicated a willingness to serve in order to discuss the school’s philosophy and the specific role, responsibilities, time commitment and key skills required.
4. The new Parent Council reps will be introduced at the May Parent Council meeting and given orientation and binder.

5. PARENT COUNCIL COORDINATORS

Roles

1. **“Heads” Committee Coordinator**
2. **“Hearts” Committee Coordinator**
3. **“Hands” Committee Coordinator**

Intention

The role of each coordinator is to be responsible for communicating the works and needs of these branches to the rest of Parent Council and to help to connect interested volunteers with a working group.

Responsibilities

- Attend Parent Council meetings
- Present pertinent communication at Parent Council meetings

Head:

The Heads Committee serves in the leadership role of the Parent Council, acting as a resource and as a conduit for information to and from the school leadership to the parent body as a whole. This branch also organizes groups and events to support parent education about our school, Waldorf education, and our community.

Hearts:

The Hearts Committee works to nourish and bring families together during their time at RSSAA, helping to nurture a culture of mindfulness in which all feel welcomed and appreciated. These efforts are realized through activities such as the New Parent Dinner, Welcome Wagon and the Faculty Appreciation Lunch.

Hands:

The Hands Committee contributes direct physical outreach to our school, from labor and handwork to gardening, site beautification and fundraising. This active group supports the healthy functioning of our vibrant community.

Term – One year (May through May)

Process for taking on a volunteer role

1. Letters will go out to all parents in March announcing the opportunity to serve as a volunteer.
2. Interested parents will contact the current volunteer to let them know of their interest.
3. The current contact will set up a meeting with all parents who have indicated a willingness to serve in order to discuss the school’s philosophy and the specific role, responsibilities, time commitment and key skills required.
4. The new Parent Council reps will be introduced at the May Parent Council meeting and given orientation and binder.

6. RSSAA Faculty and Administrative Contact to Parent Council

Members

As this initiative gets off the ground, the group sees the importance and value of including at least one RSSAA contact from each of the following groups: faculty and administration.

Role

To ensure that all the voices are at the table and to keep respective committees informed.

Responsibilities

- Attend Parent Council meetings
- Present pertinent news and communication at Parent Council meetings
- Give Parent Council updates at respective committees
- Help build bridges and foster collaboration
- Keep Parent Council informed of existing avenues for communication and work so we're not "reinventing the wheel"

IV. Processes

A. Ideas and Initiatives

There is a process for bringing forward projects, ideas, suggestions, initiatives and concerns.

1. An individual can explore support for his or her idea with other parents, faculty, administration, Board members, committees or at monthly Parent Council meeting.
2. If the idea seems viable, interested members representing a **variety of perspectives** create proposal (see Appendix A).

The initiating group may need to consult with the Parent Council Coordinating Team for support in determining if the idea warrants the need for a written proposal and, if so, whether the proposal should go to a committee. If the proposal has significant impact on the whole community or will require extensive collaboration across committees, parents, faculty, etc., then the proposal may need to be brought to the entire Parent Council.

3. **If it is a decision to be made by committee**, those who initiated the proposal must keep lines of communication open with the community and announce the final decision.
4. **If it is a decision to be made at a Parent Council meeting:**
 - a. Coordinating team supports the group bringing the proposal forward, as necessary, to make sure it is clear and complete, then distributes it along with the upcoming monthly meeting agenda.

b. The proposal is decided in a minimum of two Parent Council meetings. Step 1 is “intro and discussion”; Step 2 is “discussion and decision.” If the proposal is still lacking adequate support, it goes back to the initiating group. The final decision is made by consensus using “Consensus Decision Making Process” (see Appendix

Note: any amendments to the Parent Council charter will require a proposal.

B. Decision-Making Process

All decisions are made by consensus. See Appendix B for consensus guidelines.

C. Existing Processes & Roles

It is important for the Parent Council to reinforce the following **existing** RSSAA processes and roles.

1. “Room Parents” facilitate communication between the teacher and the class parents about class projects, field trips and events. This is strictly a class function and not part of the Parent Council.
2. There exists a clear process for working through concerns and conflict. Please reference “Community Support Process” in the Parent Handbook