

Model for a Constitution for School Parent Associations

Prepared by Federation of P&F Associations of Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Sydney
and the Parent Personnel from the Catholic Education Office, Sydney

Explanatory Notes



**THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE
ST JOSEPH'S PARENTS & FRIENDS
ASSOCIATION**

Version 4, November 13, 2006

This constitution is based on the November 2005 revision of the *Model for a Constitution for School Parent Associations* prepared by the Federation of Parents & Friends (P&F) Associations of Catholic Schools and the Parent Personnel of the Catholic Education Office, Sydney

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<p>1. NAME</p> <p>This Association shall be known as The St Joseph's Parents & Friends Association and shall be referred to in this document as the Association.</p> <p>2. AIM</p> <p>2.1 What is the aim of the Association?</p> <p>The Association recognises and values the role that parents/carers play in the education of their children and aims to strengthen the partnership between family, school, parish and the wider community for the benefit of their children's overall development and learning.</p> <p>2.2 How will the Association do this?</p> <p>The Association will endeavour to do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) reaching out to all associated with the school to build a friendly and welcoming community which seeks to involve all its members; (b) providing a parental perspective to assist the Principal in decision making; (c) acting as a mechanism for representing parents when it is appropriate to do so; (d) raising funds to provide resources and opportunities for enriching the learning environment of the school; (e) supporting parents/carers in their parental responsibilities and involvement in their children's learning at home and at school; (f) providing a forum where matters relating to the education and development of students can be discussed productively; (g) providing opportunities for parents/carers to gain insights into the life of the school, current developments in education and Catholic education in particular; (h) providing a means for parents/carers to affiliate with the Federation of P&F Associations of Catholic Schools and have a voice at Archdiocesan level. 	<p><i>Catholic schools have been established by the Church to work in partnership with parents in providing a loving Christian community in which young people can grow in faith and experience a rewarding, diverse, general education as well.</i></p> <p><i>Parent Associations exist as part of the school to support the school and its community. As such they work in collaboration with the school Principal and Parish Priest/s in an advisory capacity.</i></p> <p><i>Canon 796 requires that: "There be the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling their task, teachers are to collaborate closely with parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem." (Partners in Faith, Hope and Love. p9)</i></p> <p><i>Sydney CEO documents state that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>As well as assisting to provide for the material needs of the school, formal parent groups can be a valuable means of uniting the school community and enhancing co-operation, collaboration and communication between family, parish, school and wider community</i> ▪ <i>It is expected that school communities establish formal parent bodies such as P&F Associations or other relevant parent groups. This is in keeping with Canon Law (Canon 796)</i> ▪ <i>It is expected that the Principal will support the role of formal parent groups</i>

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<p>3. LIMITATION</p> <p>Are there any restrictions on the Association?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *3.1 The Association has no legal identity separate from the School. It is a consultative body established under the auspices of the Principal, who is responsible for carrying out the policies and directives of the Archbishop and the Catholic Education Office, Sydney. *3.2 The Association has no authority in the day-to-day operation or management of the school. *3.3 The Association shall seek the consent of the Principal and the Parish Priest for activities which affect the parish or school property and its use. <p>4. MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Who can be a member?</p> <p>4.1 All parents/carers of pupils attending the school, school staff and friends of the school who are interested in furthering the aim of the Association are members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *4.2 The Principal and the Parish Priest are ex-officio members of the Association and its committees. <p>5. MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *5.1 What is the Executive Committee? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The Executive Committee is the group responsible for the management of the Association. (b) The Executive Committee comprises the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Social Committee Coordinator, together with the ex-officio members and other members elected at a general meeting. (c) The Principal and Parish Priest are ex-officio members of the Executive Committee. 	<p><i>Archdiocesan systemic schools are not legal entities in their own right, therefore parent bodies which are part of the school and parish, can not take on a legal identity of their own. Parent Associations are not to be separately incorporated.</i></p> <p><i>The Association recognises the need to act with respect for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the authority and responsibility of the Principal in making decisions relating to the school and / or any activity using the school's name;</i> • <i>the role of the Parish Priest with regard to decisions involving school / parish property and;</i> • <i>the established protocols of the school and parish.</i> <p><i>Because the Association is an umbrella body for community involvement in the school it tries to find ways to help all feel included and valued.</i></p> <p><i>Ex-officio = members by right of office held. Ex-officio members have the same rights as ordinary members, including voting, however, they do not always choose to exercise these rights. Although the priest's responsibilities often preclude active involvement in Parent Association Meetings an invitation should be extended once dates have been finalised for the year.</i></p> <p><i>The Executive Committee meets with the Principal prior to General meetings to plan the activities of the Association, to look at issues that have been identified, (preferably in writing) to plan the agenda for the General meeting and consider the most suitable way of dealing with issues raised.</i></p> <p><i>There is scope for the election of an Executive team to decide amongst themselves which roles they will fulfill.</i></p> <p><i>The Executive Committee may include coordinators of any Committees that assist with the work of the Association. Their</i></p>

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<p>(d) The Executive Committee has the power to make decisions at Executive Meetings on behalf of the Association when appropriate and within the limits of clause 12.3(c) (allocation of funds).</p> <p>*5.2 What are the responsibilities of the Executive Committee?</p> <p>The Executive Committee is responsible for:</p> <p>(a) organising an appropriate induction process for Executive Members;</p> <p>(b) identifying and using opportunities that promote the aim of the Association;</p> <p>(c) ensuring that the Association works collaboratively and co-operatively with the Principal and the relevant priest/s;</p> <p>(d) ensuring the Association's financial accountability (see clause 12 Funds);</p> <p>(e) organising General Meetings (see clause 10.1 Meetings);</p> <p>(f) setting up and supervising Committees that assist with the work of the Association (see clause 13 Committees).</p> <p>(g) appointing delegates to the Federation of P&F Associations.</p> <p>5.3 How does the Executive Committee work?</p> <p>(a) The Executive Committee shall meet by arrangement with the Principal or Principal's nominee for the effective planning & management of the Association.</p> <p>(b) The Executive Committee shall organise an Executive Committee Meeting prior to each General Meeting for the purpose of preparing the agenda and finalising arrangements for the General Meeting.</p> <p>(c) The Executive Committee Meeting must comprise half of the Executive Committee plus one. This must include the Principal or Principal's nominee.</p>	<p><i>titles must be added to this clause and their Duties of Office must be specified in Clause 6.0.</i></p> <p><i>Some schools find the position of Vice-President useful because it serves both as a support for the President and as preparation for Presidency. Other roles can be considered in order to spread responsibilities and make the workload more manageable such as:</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>Class Parent Coordinator</i></td> <td><i>Fund-raising Coordinator</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Social Events Coordinator</i></td> <td><i>Family Care Coordinator</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Parent Education Coordinator</i></td> <td><i>Road Safety Coordinator</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Public Relations Coordinator</i></td> <td><i>Political Action Coordinator</i></td> </tr> </table> <p><i>See Federation Information Sheets for further clarification</i></p> <p><i>The Federation requests the nomination of two delegates as a school contact for Federation activities such as the AGC and the distribution of information.</i></p>	<i>Class Parent Coordinator</i>	<i>Fund-raising Coordinator</i>	<i>Social Events Coordinator</i>	<i>Family Care Coordinator</i>	<i>Parent Education Coordinator</i>	<i>Road Safety Coordinator</i>	<i>Public Relations Coordinator</i>	<i>Political Action Coordinator</i>
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<p>6. DUTIES OF OFFICE</p> <p>6.1 What is the role of the President?</p> <p>The President:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Provides leadership and direction for the Association by working co-operatively and collaboratively with the Principal; (b) Promotes the aim of the Association in dealings with its members; (c) Supports the Executive Committee Members; (d) Presides at all meetings or, if absent, nominates another member of the Executive Committee to preside; (e) Ensures the efficient running of meetings; (f) Prepares the agenda in consultation with the Executive Committee; (g) Ensures that Minutes of the previous meeting are endorsed as being an accurate record of what took place. (h) Prepares and presents the Annual President's Report of the Association <p>6.2 What is the role of the Vice President?</p> <p>The Vice President:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Participates in Executive Committee meetings (b) Supports the President in day to day Association activities (c) Assumes the role of Chairperson for committee and general meetings when the President is unable to attend; <p>6.3 What is the role of the Secretary?</p> <p>The Secretary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (d) Manages the day-to-day communications and records of the Association (e) Organises meetings, records accurate Draft Minutes in a style agreed upon by the Executive Committee and gets them formalised as agreed to by the Executive Committee; (b) Receives and deals with correspondence in a manner agreed upon by the Executive Committee; (c) Maintains copies of Minutes and such correspondence as is appropriate; (d) Receives agenda items as in 10.1 (c); (e) Passes on records, in good order, to the incoming Secretary. 	<p><i>See Federation Information Sheet 3: Parent Associations & Duties of the Secretary.</i></p>

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<p>7.4 Candidates for President should have previous service on the Executive Committee or active participation on other Association Committees.</p> <p>*7.5 The returning officer for any election is the Principal (or nominee).</p> <p>7.6 Any vacancy on the Executive shall be filled by election by the members of the Association at any General Meeting.</p> <p>8. RE-ELECTION</p> <p>Can officers be re-elected?</p> <p>8.1 All executive committee members are eligible for re-election with the following exceptions 8.2 and 8.3.</p> <p>8.2 The President must not hold office for a period exceeding four (4) consecutive years.</p> <p>8.3 Other Officers must not serve in the <i>same</i> position for a consecutive period exceeding three (3) years.</p> <p>9. TERMINATION OF OFFICE</p> <p>Can positions be terminated?</p> <p>9.1 The position of any officer absent from any two consecutive General Meetings without reasonable cause may be declared vacant.</p> <p>9.2 Providing due notice of a motion specifying the grounds for removal has first been given, a member of the Executive Committee may be removed from office by resolution of the Association carried out at a General or Special General Meeting.</p>	<p><i>The advantages for having an experienced and skilled parent leader needs to be considered. Consideration should also be given to how best to broaden the experience of more parents in the area of school and general educational activities.</i></p> <p><i>General Meetings provide a regular opportunity for the involvement of the wider school community in the business of the Association.</i></p>

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<p>10. GENERAL MEETINGS</p> <p>How will the Association meet?</p> <p>10.1 General Meetings</p> <p>(a) The Executive Committee will organise a General Meeting at least once every school term.</p> <p>(b) The First General Meeting is to be held by the end of March and the Last General Meeting before the beginning of December.</p> <p>(c) Notice of meeting shall be given in a prior school newsletter and shall indicate the need for members to send agenda items, in writing, to the Secretary before the date of the next Executive Committee Meeting.</p> <p>(d) A quorum for a General Meeting shall be eight (8) members including the Principal (or nominee) and three (3) Executive Committee members.</p> <p>(e) A period of fifteen minutes is to be allowed before a General Meeting is cancelled.</p> <p>(f) No meeting is to continue beyond one and half-hours unless a two-thirds majority of those present agree to an extension.</p> <p>(g) All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with standard meeting procedures. In the case of a tied vote the chairperson shall exercise a casting vote.</p> <p>(h) The order of business is as follows, unless the majority of those present agree to change it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer and Welcome Record of Attendance and Apologies Confirmation and acceptance of the Minutes of previous meeting Business arising from those Minutes Correspondence: incoming & outgoing Reports Matters arising from Executive Meeting (includes Motions proposed) Guest Speaker and / or Discussion Session on nominated topic Matters for Future Consideration Confirmation of next meeting date Conclusion 	<p><i>It is advantageous for dates of meetings for the year to be published as early as possible at the commencement of the school year.</i></p> <p><i>The size of the quorum needs to take into account the size of the school community and adjusted accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>A pre-organised and publicised agenda is required. People appreciate meetings being planned and structured so they can achieve their purposes. Some prepared input and some discussion time around an already identified topic can improve peoples' understanding of a subject and help them feel included</i></p> <p><i>The President and Treasurer provide reports. The Principal, Committee Coordinators and the Delegate to the Federation may also give reports.</i></p> <p><i>Matters for Future Consideration replaces 'General Business' in an attempt to deal more productively with matters of concern raised at the last minute. People should not expect that issues, without notice, can be dealt with at the meeting at which they were raised. As always the chairperson decides if and how the matter might best be addressed.</i></p>

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<p>10.2 At which General Meeting will the Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer be presented and elections held?</p> <p>The first general meeting will be the occasion for the formal presentation of the Annual Reports, accounts balance sheet (pending audited accounts as at 31 December) and the election of office bearers (whose term commences at the start of the following year).</p> <p>11. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS</p> <p>11.1 What is a Special General Meeting?</p> <p>A Special General Meeting is a mechanism for supporting the continued operation of the Association in unusual circumstances.</p> <p>11.2 What is involved in calling a Special General Meeting?</p> <p>(a) A Special General Meeting can be called on the authority of the Executive Committee or on written request to the Executive Committee by members of ten (10) individual families.</p> <p>(b) A Special General Meeting must be held within 28 days of the request being appropriately registered or, if that 28 day period expires on a date which is not within a school term, within 14 days of the commencement of the next school term.</p> <p>(c) At least seven (7) days notice of the Special General Meeting shall be given in a prior school newsletter. The object of the meeting shall be clearly stated.</p> <p>(d) A quorum for a Special General Meeting shall be fifteen (15) members and must include the Principal or Principal's nominee and three (3) members of the Executive Committee.</p> <p>(e) *A Special General Meeting can also be called on the authority of the Principal in the event of there not being an appropriately constituted Executive Committee or if, in the opinion of the Principal, the Association is not fulfilling its aim.</p>	<p><i>A Special General Meeting could be called in circumstances such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>when a General Meeting is not scheduled but Association business needs to be dealt with;</i> ▪ <i>when a couple of General Meetings have been cancelled due to lack of a quorum;</i> ▪ <i>if the Association is not fulfilling its aim</i> ▪ <i>if at the Annual General Meeting no one has accepted positions on the Executive Committee and the Association is unable to function.</i> <p><i>The size of the quorum needs to take into account the size of the school community and adjusted accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>See Information Sheet 4: Parent Associations & Money</i></p>

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<p>12. FUNDS</p> <p>12.1 How are funds raised?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Association has adopted a levy as the principal source of fund raising. The levy is collected during the first 3 terms of the year. b) The levy is \$40 per billing term per family and may be increased by the Executive Committee in line with the consumer price index (CPI) if required. c) The adoption of a levy does not preclude the possibility of raising additional funds by other means. However, the following principles must be adhered to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any additional activities held for the purpose of fund raising should ideally look to the broader community outside the school 2. The participation of school families must be, and stressed to be, entirely optional. 3. All additional fund raising activities must be approved by the Executive Committee and Principal d) The operation of the school tuck shop will generally produce a margin that will contribute to P&F funds. e) Association social functions may also net small margins as a result of the need to ensure cost coverage. <p>12.2 How are funds to be managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) *Funds are to be used solely for the Aim of the Association; (b) *All funds raised by or on behalf of the Association must be banked promptly and fully intact into an account in the name of the Association and all expenses paid by cheque; (c) Funds of the Association are to be deposited in a reputable financial institution in the name of the Association; (d) Authorised signatories to the account are any two of the following: President, Treasurer, Principal and Assistant Principal. At the end of their term of office, their signatures must be removed and replaced by the signatures of the incoming officers; (e) Funds are transferred to the school for the agreed upon purchase of goods and services to ensure that GST input tax credits are obtained; (f) All accounts must be paid promptly; (g) For the purposes of approved Association activities, the Executive may 	<p><i>Matters.</i></p> <p><i>The use of a levy has been established to both simplify principal fund raising and provide an element of certainty with respect to forward planning. It has been recognised that organising large fund raising activities generally imposes a unfair burden on a small group of individuals and families. Also, given the extent of other community activities in the Oatley area, it would be more difficult to rely on external participation as the primary funding source.</i></p> <p><i>Before the levy existed, the P&F organised an annual fete. The total amount raised (approximately \$10,000) became the basis for deciding on the levy amount.</i></p> <p><i>The possibility of raising additional funds should not be discounted, but recognise that the parent community have met their commitment through the levy. Thus, activities such as the stall at the Oatley Lions Club Festival look to raise funds from the broader community, beyond the school family.</i></p> <p><i>Cash received should not be used to pay bills – there needs to be a paper trail of all incomings and outgoings. It is suggested funds be deposited with the Catholic Development Fund (CDF).</i></p> <p><i>It is suggested that the Principal's signature is included for convenience and emergency situations that may occur.</i></p> <p><i>Auditing as at 31 December is a CEO and Department of Education, Science & Training (DEST) requirement.</i></p> <p><i>A consultation at the beginning of the year is essential. The Principal is in the best position to suggest areas that meet the school's identified priorities. However, enthusiasm about fundraising can only be sustained through knowledge of and a sense of ownership of how the funds are spent. The consultation needs to be realistic about the level of funding that the Parent Association can provide.</i></p> <p><i>The amount in petty cash should be agreed to at the First</i></p>

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<p>grant the use of the Association financial accounts as a clearing account with the specific provision that any cheques drawn must equal monies deposited.</p> <p>(h) Funds must be audited as at 31 December.</p> <p>12.3 How are decisions made about allocation of funds raised?</p> <p>(a) The Executive Committee consults with the school Principal to agree on a list of needs and suggest some priorities for ratification at the first General Meeting each year.</p> <p>(b) *The Association may only allocate and disburse funds for school purposes after consulting with the School Principal about school priorities. Agreed funds should be presented as soon as practicable.</p> <p>(c) *With the exception of petty cash and amounts up to \$500, all expenditure of the Association's funds must be approved or ratified by the Association at a General Meeting.</p> <p>* 12.4 What are the Annual Audit requirements of the Association?</p> <p>(a) Financial records must be audited as at 31 December each year to comply with Federal Government Financial Questionnaire Reporting.</p> <p>(b) The Auditor must be an qualified and independent Accountant</p> <p>(c) The Annual Audit must be completed in time to be accepted at the First General Meeting and a copy given to the School Principal by 31 March each year.</p>	<p><i>General Meeting and a cheque drawn. A Cash Float can also be made available for major one-off activities. Approval of floats should be formally agreed to and minuted at a General meeting prior to the money being needed.</i></p> <p><i>In order to avoid unnecessary delays and overhead, the Executive has the authority to approve expenditure up to \$500 within the constraints of 12.3(b). This was agreed at a General Meeting under the previous constitution.</i></p> <p><i>Clause 12.2(g) exists to allow monies to be collected by the P&F and then cheques drawn to providers for functions such as social events where it would be impractical or inappropriate to present cash.</i></p> <p><i>The audited figure is the total amount of funds that the Association has given to the school in the calendar year. The Auditor must:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• be a member of one of the following professional bodies: The Institute of Chartered Accountants, The Australian Society of CPAs or the National Institute of Accountants</i> <i>• not be a member (or relative of a member) of the Executive Committee.</i>

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<p>13. COMMITTEES</p> <p>13.1 How do Committees operate?</p> <p>(a) The Association may set up Committees to carry out particular functions on its behalf. These Committees are to have specific Terms of Reference and are to report their operations to General Meetings of the Association. Where possible, they should include at least one member of the Executive Committee.</p> <p>(b) After paying expenses (receipted) of their operations, the balance of funds of above committees are remitted to the funds of the Association as soon as it is practical to do so.</p> <p>(c) The St Joseph's Parents & Friends Association Social Committee exists to foster community involvement and the nurturing of a warm, Catholic environment for the families and friends of the school. The Executive Social Committee Coordinator will organise and oversee the operation of the Social Committee.</p> <p>*14. AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION</p> <p>How can changes be made to this Constitution?</p> <p>*14.1 This Constitution may only be changed by resolution at a General Meeting or a Special General Meeting and only after due notice, in writing, shall have been given at a previous General Meeting.</p>	<p><i>Committees are recommended as a means of encouraging the inclusion of as many parents and community members as possible. Volunteers are much more likely to make themselves available for specific time-limited tasks than for open-ended roles.</i></p> <p><i>The Social Committee Coordinator will be assisted by non-executive members in the planning and operation of Social Committee functions.</i></p> <p><i>Two parents from each school year will be nominated to participate as required in Social Committee meetings.</i></p> <p><i>The Social Committee will meet as required to discuss and plan events to support the goals of the committee</i></p> <p><i>These events should be designed to bring families and parents together, as opposed to being fundraising activities. These activities should aim to run on a cost recovery basis and eliminate any financial exposure of the Association.</i></p> <p><i>The general funds of the Association should not be used to cover shortfalls in revenue for any such activities.</i></p> <p><i>Consideration should be given to cancelling or postponing events if they appear unviable.</i></p>
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<p>*14.2 All amendments must be accepted by at least three quarters of those present and must be in accordance with the aims of the Constitution.</p> <p>*15. DISSOLUTION</p> <p>*15.1 How might the Association be dissolved?</p> <p>(a) The Association is automatically dissolved if the school closes down or is amalgamated.</p> <p>(b) The Association can be dissolved following a Special General Meeting. This can be called in accordance with Clause 11 specifically for the purpose of providing an opportunity for the school community to discuss the issue to dissolve the Association. At least three-quarters of the members present must vote in favour of the resolution to dissolve the Association for the motion to be carried.</p> <p>(c) In certain serious circumstances where it is judged that the functions of the Association is at variance with the vision and mission of Catholic Education, the Regional Director may intervene and dissolve the operations of the Association.</p> <p>*15.2 What happens to assets, records and funds on dissolution?</p> <p>After all expenses and liabilities are paid;</p> <p>(a) Where a school is closed under clause 15.1(a), the remaining assets, records and funds shall be handed over to the Parish Priest in the case of a primary school and the CEO in the case of a secondary school</p> <p>(b) Where a school is amalgamated under clause 15.1(a), the remaining assets, records and funds shall be handed over to the Principal of the amalgamated school for the purposes of the amalgamated school</p> <p>(c) Where an Association is dissolved under clause 15.1(b), the remaining assets, records and funds shall be handed over to the school Principal for the purposes of the school.</p>	

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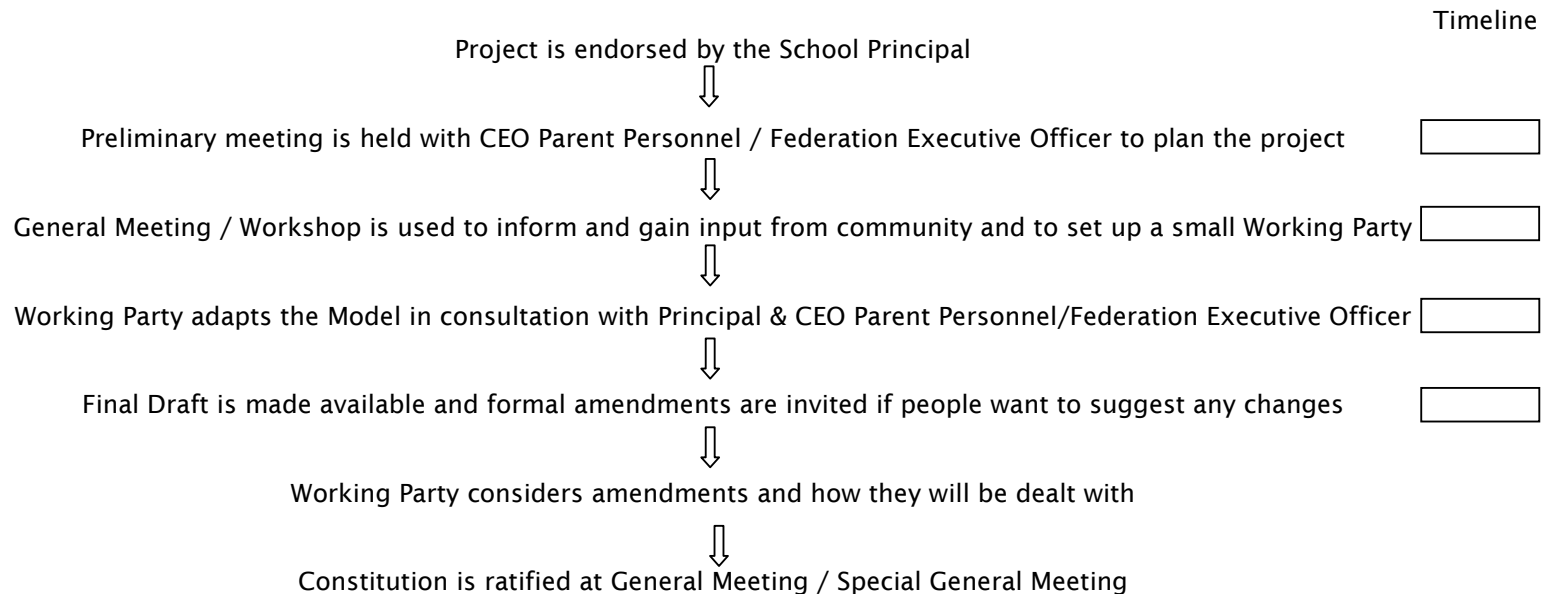


Suggested Process for Developing or Updating a Constitution

A constitution encapsulates the fundamental principles which underpin an Association and which guide its day-to-day activities.

The Model aims to provide guidance and facilitate the process, helping you clarify your purpose, outline your basic structure and provide you with a solid basis for an effective school Parent Association. Remember that, for CEO schools, some clauses should not be changed and so your draft constitution needs to be checked out by the Principal & CEO Parent Personnel/Federation Executive Officer.

The process you need to follow depends on whether you already have a Parent Association or if you are setting up a new one but try to get input from a wide cross section of the community and keep everyone informed of the project's timeline and progress.



Your Parent Association Constitution should be a living document that guides its members in being collaborative and life giving for the whole community