Effective Meetings:
Making Time for Conversations that Matter

At a glance:

The purpose of a meeting is to enable all advisory board members to obtain information, consider issues, exchange ideas so as to advise the Principal on matters related to enhancing the learning and wellbeing of all students in the school community. As meetings are the primary source of communication and ‘work’ for advisory boards, it is important that they are efficient and effective, respecting everyone’s time as their most valuable resource.

Where do you spend your time?

“Strategic planning helps an organization get from the present to the future, but generative thinking provides a vision of that future.”

In the reflective atmosphere of a well facilitated meeting, the principal can seek the group’s advice on matters of school policy and “big picture” matters presently affecting the school and most importantly, the future.

If advisory bodies are to undertake this role, then meetings must be structured so that plenty of time is allocated for conversations that matter about responding to the needs of the community and the future directions rather than just reporting on past events.

The diagram below shows where you should try to invest your time to allow for ‘generative thinking’ conversations:

Refer to: Progressive (Rolling) Agenda
**Meeting Planning Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEETING:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>START / END:</th>
<th>LOCATION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANTS</td>
<td></td>
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**ANNUAL GOALS:**

**PROPOSED OUTCOMES FOR MEETING:**

**PREPARATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTES</th>
<th>WHO RESPONSIBLE?</th>
<th>COMPLETED BY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Venue**
   (including hospitality eg. Catering.) | | |
| **Materials**
   (including items for Prayer Space, stationary, IT, process tools) | | |
| **Meeting papers**
   * Will they be posted online eg. share point
   * given out at meetings only
   * mailed out prior to meeting
   * emailed out | | |
| **Building Knowledge**
   (Modules, Learning tools, IT) | | |
| **Evaluation Tools** | | |
| **Other** | | |

**NOTES**
Better Practices

“Not another meeting!”

We have all experienced bad, unproductive and clock-watching boring meetings .... so what makes a ‘good’ meeting? A good meeting is not necessarily an efficient meeting, a meeting can run to time and all agenda items can be ticked off but the meeting may not necessarily have been ‘effective’. Great meetings are characterized by great in-depth discussions on significant and responsive-based forward thinking, ‘big picture’ issues.

The 4 core elements for creating a purposeful meeting are:

1. Purpose
2. Preparation
3. Process
4. Participation
5. Reflective Evaluation / Follow-up

Great meetings what next?: meetings by themselves make nothing happen; processes need to be followed through, decisions implemented, information communicated to the wider community.

Are all ‘voices’ being heard: Knowing what matters to your community through effective and ongoing two-way communication with all stakeholders, not just those individuals gathered around the table.

Why are we meeting: The SAB must have a clearly defined and shared purpose that aligns with the mission and strategic plan or SIP of the school.

Preparation: Thoughtful planning, a strong purposeful agenda and good meeting papers set the tone even before the meeting begins.

Process is key: effective tools, excellent facilitation strategies; opportunities for ongoing individual and collective learning & continual reflective evaluation creates promote purposeful discussion.

Refer to: Practical Meeting Tools; Evaluation and Reflection Tools; Communication Plan
PURPOSE - PREPARING A MEETING AGENDA

The chairperson of the advisory body and the school principal should work together to plan an agenda that will contribute to a purposeful, productive and engaging meeting.

Three core questions can guide the chair and principal in preparing for an effective meeting:

1. What are the two or three most important issues to be focusing on?
   - Are these issues appropriate to be addressed at a meeting? Should discussion on this issue start at the advisory body level or be delegated to committee to prepare the discussion for the advisory body?
   - What are the core questions we should be asking regarding each issue?

2. What ongoing work must the advisory body be doing at this particular point in time?
   - What must the advisory body do as part of its due diligence or governance responsibilities as guided by their constitution, annual plan or time of year?
   - TIP: An annual calendar/forward agenda ensures key activities are included agenda when appropriate, e.g. budget approval, audit review, analyzing data from national assessments etc

3. What information do the advisory body members need?
   - Do the members need background information, data, or context in order to meaningfully discuss each issue at the meeting? How will this information be conveyed? (refer to preparing better papers – next?)
   - What does the advisory body need in terms of its ongoing education and development that will help it make good, informed decisions and where do we find the support and resources to meet those needs?

BETTER PREPARATION – WHAT DOES EVERYONE NEED TO KNOW BEFORE THE MEETING?

Meeting Papers:

- Why is this included - What do members need to do before the meeting?
  
  So that members are not overloaded with information, consider what is the reason for including and what you want the members to do with it both prior to and at the meeting – ensure all meeting material is sent in a timely manner.

- Should reports be in writing or given verbally at a meeting? – It is important to respect people’s time and not expect them to read things that will be just be repeated verbatim at the meeting. Make use of a Consent Agenda.

- Anticipate key question – Provide brief, useful updates on priority matters, especially those with data that needs to be interpreted eg. financial ones

Meetings details: Ensure all basic logistical details are conveyed especially when new members are starting eg meeting location and time, directions to the venue if needed, and contact details of key people.

Tip in agenda include whether for information, professional dev, for ratification etc

Tip if papers are emailed, will members need a hard copy - consider the cost of printing: members should not be out of pocket.

Tip - Use a consent agenda to acknowledge the report & the work of the respective committee.
Better Together: Catholic School Advisory Bodies

Engaging, Learning, Knowing, Responding

Better Together: Catholic School Advisory Bodies

www.btadvisorybodies.catholic.edu.au

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Sydney South NSW 1235
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TRANSLATING THE ANNUAL / ROLLING AGENDA INTO A PRACTICAL MEETING AGENDA -
aligning with the Liturgical, School and Education Calendars and providing necessary information /
papers via appropriate means (eg. Email, Sharepoint, School & Better Together website.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liturgical</th>
<th>ASH WEDNESDAY / LENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>HSC RESULTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>SWIMMING CARNIVAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEAST DAY</td>
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**ITEM [Based on Annual /Rolling Agenda]**

- Preliminary Business (10%)
  - Welcome new members activity
  - Previous Minutes

- Current Business (40%)
  - Principals Report
  - Analyse HSC Data
  - Parent Engagement

- Future Business (50%)
  - SIP goal planning & communication
  - Surveying school community
  - Formation – Role of Social Media in Communicating with community

**PURPOSE**

- Team building
- Ratify
- For information
- For discussion
- For decision / ratifying / for building knowledge
- For discussion
- For building knowledge

**BACKGROUND / MATERIAL - Pre-Reading**

- Contact details of current and new members (given
- Previous minutes and annual report summary from
- Summary of HSC data & ‘cheat sheet’ on interpretation
- List of current Parent Engagement Initiatives
- Previous SIP goals and summary of evaluations.
- Links to examples of on-line surveys
- Powerpoint on Better Together website “Social M

**Jargon Busters: SIP – School Improvement Plan**

Add acronyms and explanation of terms to be used during meeting at bottom of agenda
# AGENDA

**MEETING:** (eg. Catholic School Advisory Body Monthly Meeting)  
**VENUE:**  
**DATE:**  
**TIME:** [including whether meal, drinks etc]  

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

**PRAYER:**

**Liturical**  
[CURRENT, IMMEDIATE AND FUTURE]

| **ITEM** [BASED ON ANNUAL / ROLLING AGENDA] | **PURPOSE**  
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| PRELIMINARY BUSINESS                     | ![For information](image1)  
iltergical [CURRENT, IMMEDIATE AND FUTURE] | ![For discussion](image2)  
[For decision/ ratifying](image3)  
[For building knowledge](image4) | **BACKGROUND / MATERIAL - PRE-READING**  
[ MATERIALS REQUIRED, PRE-READING REQUIRED AND ATTACHED, AND/OR HYPERLINKS TO RELEVANT INFORMATION, WEBSITES PRESENTATIONS, DOCUMENTS ETC] | **RECOMMENDED ACTION / FOLLOW-UP**  
[WHAT IS THE EXPECTED ACTION?] |  
| CURRENT BUSINESS                         |  
[WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE SCHOOL? WHERE ARE WE NOW?]  
(40% TIME) |  
| FUTURE BUSINESS                          |  
[WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO? WHERE ARE WE GOING?]  
[TIME FOR FORMATION, DISCUSSION, ACQUIRING NEW KNOWLEDGE/ SKILLS. GOAL SETTING/ VISIONING.]  
(50% TIME) |  

**JARGON BUSTERS:** SIP – School Improvement Plan;

Next Proposed Meeting Date: