

February SAC Tip of the Month: Using Technology to Facilitate SAC Meetings

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As School Advisory Councils are picking up again in the new calendar year, many schools face similar barriers to participation and attendance at SAC meetings. The administrators at the Academies at Roxborough High School had a conversation with parents about what barriers prevent them from attending school meeting and how they could address them. Roxborough's Assistant Principal, Michele Dawson named a few of these obstacles: many families live far away from the school, parents' work schedules, and transportation. As Roxborough's leadership team brainstormed what to do to gain more parent participation, they decided to try conference calls and have found immense success in increasing the parent participation in SAC meetings. Assistant Principal Dawson shares that at Roxborough, they use a free website called [Freeconferencecall.com](#), where "multiple lines come together with one number. One person sets up the call and then is given an access code and then can join into the conversation." Other free resources and apps exist for video or phone meetings, like Google Hangouts, Skype, and WhatsApp.

Let's take a look at some of the benefits of using technology facilitate your SAC meetings:

Convenience of Location: Because technology such as a conference call enables parents to make a call from wherever they are, they don't have to travel to the school in order to take part in the meeting. They can be a part of the meeting from the convenience of their own homes or even while they are on the go from one place to another. Ms. Dawson also commented: "If the weather is bad, then everybody can be in the comfort of his/her home."

Saves Time: Using technology can save parents time, especially travel time. If a parent lives very far away, he or she might have to spend a lot of additional time on public transportation or driving over to the meeting location. By being able to call in, there's no need to incorporate any travel time because dialing a few buttons only takes seconds!

Easy to Promote: Ms. Dawson says that it has been easier for parents to spread the word about a SAC meeting because all they have to do is give the phone number and access code to other parents or community members and anyone can easily call in. This can increase the promoting and advertising of SAC meetings as well.

Ability to multi-task: Sometimes parents don't have the time to commit a couple of hours to attend a meeting with all the demands of life, but through the usage of technology, they can phone into the meeting while running errands, cooking dinner, or other everyday tasks.

Documentation of Meetings: Using technology can also help keep track of when meetings happened and log who joined into the conversation at what time, an effective tool for taking meeting attendance!

We know that gaining participation and attendance at parent meetings can be a challenge, so why not try using technology to increase your outreach! The use of technology is an opportunity to meet families and the community where they are! What innovative strategies has your school used to increase attendance?