



# Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

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DRAFT

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Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

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# Introduction

Education is a responsibility shared by teachers, students, parents/guardians, support staff, communities, regional centres for education, and the Province of Nova Scotia, all of whom have success for every student as their priority. School Advisory Councils (SACs) are one example of a partnership that brings together individuals who share an interest in their school or Families of Schools.

Schools in Nova Scotia are focused on improving student achievement and school performance. To succeed, all the partners in our education system must work together. This includes meaningful involvement in decision-making.

SACs are volunteer organizations that receive their authority from the Nova Scotia Education Act. The establishment of SACs and the roles and responsibilities of SACs are set out in sections 21 and 22 of the Act and sections 68 – 75 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. See Appendix J for specific references to SACs in the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

SACs are an integral part of Nova Scotia schools. They are established to provide parents/guardians, staff, community members, and, where appropriate, students, with a voice to influence decisions that impact student learning. SACs bring partners together to provide principals and regional centres for education with advice that reflects the best interests of students.

One of the duties of SACs is participation in school improvement planning. The provincial school improvement plan process provides a role for SACs in the ongoing efforts of the school to improve student achievement and school performance.

The purpose of this handbook is to support SAC members, both new and experienced. It describes SACs, clarifies their roles and responsibilities, and provides information, guidelines, and samples of school advisory council documents.

SACs require ongoing support in the form of training and information so all members can perform their roles effectively. This handbook helps to address this need and establishes a common vision of the role and responsibilities of SACs.

# Guiding Principles

School advisory councils should be guided by the following principles:

- Education is a shared responsibility.
- The best interests of students must be the first consideration for all decisions.
- People at the local school level have important perspectives that should be considered in decision-making.
- School improvement leads to increased student achievement.
- School policies should take into account the unique characteristics of each school community.
- Partners need to use teamwork skills and strategies to manage change effectively.
- Involving the school community in improving the school enhances learning for all students.

# Organization of Education in Nova Scotia

<b>Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development</b>	Responsible for Nova Scotia's public education system
<b>Deputy Minister</b>	Administers the public education system
<b>Regional Executive Directors of Education</b>	Accountable to the deputy minister and direction of the minister Follow the Education Act and all regulations made pursuant to the act Responsible for the educational performance of students in their jurisdiction Responsible for establishing regional education policies Responsible for carrying out provincial policies Oversee all aspects of their schools and regional office
<b>Principals</b>	Report to the regional executive director Responsible to their school communities Provide leadership for all aspects of their schools
<b>School advisory councils</b>	Advise the school principal, regional centre for education, and in some cases the minister on educational matters

# School Advisory Council Membership

School advisory councils vary in size from a minimum of five to a maximum of eighteen members. Members are usually elected/chosen by their representative groups: teachers elect teachers, support staff elect support staff, parents/guardians elect parents/guardians, and students elect students. Community members may be appointed or elected, as specified in each school's school advisory council agreement. See Appendix A: Sample of School Advisory Council Agreement and Bylaws and Appendix E: School Advisory Council Agreement Approval Criteria.

The guidelines for selecting SAC members are set out in section 71 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. The membership of a school advisory council might look like the following:

## **Elementary school advisory council with 6 members**

- Principal
- 2 parents/guardians
- 2 school staff members (1 teacher and 1 support staff member)
- 1 community representative

## **Junior/senior high school advisory council with 10 members**

- Principal
- 3 parents/guardians
- 3 school staff members (2 teachers and 1 support staff member)
- 1 community representative
- 2 students

None of these groups can make up more than a third of the SAC unless the school advisory council agreement provides otherwise, according to section 71(3) of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

When a home and school association or parent-teacher group also exists in the school, an SAC may designate a seat for a member from this organization through its Letter of Agreement and bylaws.

Efforts should also be made to include individuals who reflect the diversity of the community served by the school. This includes, but is not limited to, African Nova Scotians, First Nations persons, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities. The SAC may choose to designate a seat on one or more of their membership groups to represent the community's diversity through the school advisory council agreement and bylaws.

The school principal is a nonvoting member, and therefore cannot serve in the role of chair. When the principal is unable to attend a meeting, the vice principal or designate may be required to serve in place of the principal.

A vacancy does not impede the authority of the SAC; however, vacancies should be filled in a timely manner as per the process outlined in the bylaws.

SAC members may be elected or appointed for a term normally not exceeding three years.

School staff are not eligible to serve on their school's SAC in the role of parent/guardian or community member.



# Expectations of School Advisory Councils

School advisory councils play a meaningful role in their school(s) by

- advising the principal and the regional centre on the following matters:
  - a. developing policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools
  - b. school practices and initiatives
  - c. communication among the school, parents and the community
  - d. any matters that are referred to the school advisory council by the principal, the regional centre for education, or the Minister
- working in collaboration with the principal and participating in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan
- preparing an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister
- subject to the approval of the regional centre, making bylaws respecting the operations of the school advisory council, including electing members and conducting meetings
- participating in Provincial and regional meetings, consultations and professional development opportunities offered for school advisory councils by the Minister, the regional centre or another education entity
- in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, determining priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council; See Appendix K: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Spending
- undertaking any responsibilities assigned by the Minister or the regional centre for education in addition to the responsibilities set out in the school advisory council agreement

# Defined Roles of School Advisory Council Members

Each SAC includes designated leadership and support roles which contribute to its effective operation. These roles are described below:

## Chair

The chair represents the SAC and ensures open lines of communication within the SAC and with the regional executive director, school, parent/guardians, and community. The chair collaborates with the principal in an advisory role. The chair and principal establish the agenda for meetings.

SAC chairs should have a good understanding of the role and responsibilities of the SAC, its bylaws and school advisory council agreement, the conduct of effective meetings, and the development of a well-functioning SAC.

The chair organizes, calls to order, and facilitates each meeting. See Appendix F: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Meetings and Appendix G: Effective School Advisory Councils. The chair ensures the agenda is followed and the bylaws are respected. The chair also encourages all members to contribute their own perspectives, interests, and concerns to the discussion. The chair helps the SAC reach consensus and resolve conflicts. The chair assists the principal in communicating to partner groups regarding the annual report.

## Vice chair

It is optional for the SAC to have a vice chair. A vice chair acts as chair when the chair is absent.

## Secretary

The secretary is responsible for recording and distributing the meeting summaries of meetings. The secretary ensures the meeting summaries are available to the public. See Appendix C: Sample Meeting Summaries.

## Principal

The principal is an ex officio (automatic) member of the SAC and is expected to attend all meetings. The principal is expected to attend regional-sponsored SAC workshops and events where possible.

Because the SAC is an advisory body to the school and the principal, the principal does not serve as chair. The principal collaborates with the SAC chair to prepare the agenda. Principals are a valuable resource for SAC members in that they can guide members to appropriate information. The SAC can provide advice to support the decision-making role of the principal. The principal does not have a vote on the SAC and does not count towards a majority vote. Other roles of the principal include

- providing support for the effective functioning of the SAC
- ensuring the school improvement plan
- is a standing item on the meeting agenda
- supporting the SAC in preparing the annual report in the form and containing the information as determined by the Minister

- collaborating with the chair in communicating the annual report
- supporting the review of the school advisory council agreement and bylaws
- consulting with the SAC on educational issues
- supporting professional development opportunities organized for the SAC by the Minister, the regional centre for education, or other education entity

## All members

Staff, parents/guardians, students, and community members work as a team to

- provide advice to the principal on school programs and policies
- communicate with the groups they represent in order to articulate the diverse views that exist within their school community
- represent the best interests of students
- participate in the writing and review of the school advisory council agreement, bylaws, and annual reports
- work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan

# Roles of the Supporting Partners

## Regional Executive Directors of Education

Regional executive directors through the regional centres for education provide ongoing support to school advisory councils by:

- supporting the ongoing work of SACs
- reviewing and approving the school advisory council agreement and bylaws
- recommending the school advisory council agreement for approval to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- consulting with SACs on educational issues, as set out in the act and the regulations
- organizing/supporting leadership development opportunities for SACs
- monitoring and supporting SAC performance
- advising on or resolving conflicts related to SACs
- ensuring that SACs adhere to their school advisory council agreement and bylaws
- receiving the SAC annual report
- requesting advice from SACs on policy or other matters, in accordance with the Act

## Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development supports school advisory councils by:

- developing resources to assist school advisory councils in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities
- providing a provincial model and framework for school improvement
- supporting regional centres for education by providing provincial and regional meetings and/or professional leadership development opportunities for SACs
- approving the school advisory council agreement

# Specific Responsibilities of School Advisory Councils Under the Education Act

The school advisory council does not have a role in

- personnel matters (such as supervision of the staff or the principal)
- carrying out the responsibilities of staff, each of whom have professional and legal obligations
- the day-to-day operations of the school

See Appendix J for specific provisions of the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations relating to school advisory councils.

## School Advisory Council Agreement

The development of a school advisory council agreement is the responsibility of the group coming together to form an SAC for the first time. The school advisory council agreement is a document, signed by the SAC, the regional executive director of education, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, that sets out the member composition of the SAC and the responsibilities of the partners. It must be agreed upon by all three partners. The legislation provides that the agreement may be amended from time to time, and the SAC may opt to review it at each annual meeting. If one of the parties wishes to propose a change, the regional office staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted early in the process. Changes must be approved by all partners. See Appendix A: Sample School Advisory Council Agreement and Bylaws and Appendix E: Approval Criteria for School Advisory Council Agreement.

## Bylaws

The SAC also develops its own set of bylaws upon its inception. Bylaws are written rules, definitions, and procedures that guide the election of SAC members, the conduct of SAC meetings, and the operation of the SAC. In the bylaws, the SAC should indicate the process for their review. When changes are proposed, the regional office staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted early in the process. Changes to the bylaws must be approved by the regional executive director. See Appendix A: Sample School Advisory Council Bylaws.

# School Advisory Council Meetings

## Scheduling

The time and date of all meetings, including the annual general meeting, should be decided at the SAC's first meeting of the school year.

## Agenda

The preparation of the agenda is the responsibility of the chair, in timely consultation with the principal. The agenda states the order of business and topics for discussion. See Appendix B: Sample Meeting Agenda.

## Meeting Summary

A meeting summary is a written record of a meeting. SAC summaries are compiled by the secretary and should take the form of brief highlights of key decisions and actions rather than a verbatim transcript. The summaries should be available to SAC members in advance of the next regular meeting, where they can be approved or revised. Thereafter, they should be posted in a place accessible to all members of the school community, such as a school website. See Appendix C: Sample Meeting Summaries.

## Quorum

The quorum of the council is usually a simple majority of its members. The principal is not counted as a member when determining a quorum.

## Decision-making

SACs need to determine a process for making decisions and define that process in their bylaws. Some decisions, such as approving the meeting summary of a meeting, may be taken by a simple vote. Other decisions may lend themselves more appropriately to consensus. Because of its nature as an advisory body, the SAC is encouraged to seek consensus in most decisions.

## Conflict resolution

Disputes within an SAC which cannot be resolved internally may be referred to regional centre staff person responsible for SACs. This may include conflicts relating to membership composition, election of members, or adherence to bylaws.

## Communication

Communication is very important to effective SAC operations. Communication can take the form of meeting summaries on the school website, a synopsis of activities in the school newsletter, or updates through the local media. Regularly scheduled meetings are open to members of the public, and the bylaws should provide guidelines for public participation. See Appendix F: School Advisory Council Meeting Guidelines and Appendix G: Effective School Advisory Councils.

# Establishing a School Advisory Council

School advisory councils will be established for individual schools, or for two or more schools which choose to work together. The steps in establishing a school advisory council are outlined below. Refer to Section 69 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations (Appendix J).

## Step 1: Facilitate the school advisory council formation meeting

The date, time, and location of the school advisory council formation meeting should be widely advertised well in advance of the meeting. It is important to let all parents/guardians, community members, and school staff know about the intention to establish a council.

The principal will serve as chair of the formation meeting until the election of the SAC chair is held. The agenda for the formation meeting should include, but not be limited to, the following items:

- purpose of the meeting
- procedure for the election of parent/guardian, staff, and student (if applicable) members
- discussion about community representation
- discussion of communication strategies

## Step 2: Election of members

Once the procedures for the establishment of the SAC are agreed upon, the election/selection process for parent/guardian, staff, and student members should proceed. The appointment of community members should also take place before the first regular SAC meeting of the school year.

## Step 3: Define operating procedures for the school advisory council

During the first meeting of the elected representatives, the group begins to define operating procedures including

- election of an executive including a chair
- determination of a schedule of meetings
- discussion of strategies for communication with partners
- establishment of a decision-making structure

The decision-making structure sets out which decisions will be under the authority of the SAC, how those decisions will be made, and who will be involved in the decision-making and consultation processes. It will clearly spell out the procedures of the SAC, including when decisions will be made by consensus, consultation, or vote. The preferred model for important decisions is consensus. See Appendix D: Sample Decision-Making Procedures.

## Step 4: Write the School Advisory Council Agreement

The school advisory council, the regional executive director of education, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development must enter into an agreement setting out the composition and responsibilities of the SAC (see section 70-75 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations). The school advisory council agreement will describe the specific commitments that each of the partners will make to support student learning. The letter will be signed by all partners and will contain the following items:

- effective date and review of the agreement
- decision-making structure
- structure of the school advisory council
- school advisory council's commitments
- regional centre for education's commitments
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitments
- signatories to the agreement (the school advisory council, the regional executive director, and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)

## Step 5: Develop bylaws for the school advisory council

Bylaws are rules governing issues such as

- membership structure
- eligibility for membership
- elections
- terms of office
- filling vacancies
- electing an executive
- agenda and meeting summaries
- meetings
- quorum
- appointing committees
- making decisions
- annual report
- communicating with partners
- determining priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the SAC
- resolving conflicts in relation to membership structure, election of members, and adherence to the school advisory council agreement and bylaws
- public participation in SAC meetings
- adopting and amending bylaws



# Conclusion

Serving on a school advisory council is a chance to help make our schools better and have a voice in decisions that affect students and school communities. This handbook is intended to support school advisory council members, both new and experienced, by establishing a clear common vision of their roles and responsibilities.

- What follows are several appendixes that provide additional information, guidelines, and samples of school advisory council processes:
- Appendixes A through H offer guidelines and
- tips to assist SACs in their development and work.
- Appendix I contains answers to frequently asked questions and may be a useful reference for new SAC members.
- Appendix J contains extracts from the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations related to school advisory councils, and to the roles and responsibilities of students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, regional executive directors of education, support staff, and regional centres for education, all of which touch on school advisory councils in some way.

# Appendix A: Sample School Advisory Council Agreement and Bylaws

The school advisory council agreement guides the structure and operations of the SAC. **This sample is intended to serve as a starting point in helping SACs develop their own Letter of Agreement and is not meant to be limiting.** All school advisory council agreements must comply with current legislation and policy.

## Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council School Advisory Council Agreement

The purpose of this school advisory council agreement is to establish the terms of reference for the partnership between the Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council, Eastern Regional Centre for Education (ERCE), and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to operate a School Advisory Council (SAC) at the school level.

### Effective date and review of the agreement

The agreement begins when signed by all parties. The agreement shall be reviewed annually by the SAC before June 30 of each year. Any agreed-upon revisions can be made at that time and submitted to the ERCE and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for consideration, to become effective upon approval of all partners.

### Structure of the council

The Advisory Council shall include the following members:

- the principal, who is a non-voting member
- three parents/guardians
- two teachers
- one member of the school's support staff
- two students
- three community members

Names of the members of the Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council and their respective years of service are detailed in an appendix to the bylaws.

### Decision-making process

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council (SAC) will make decisions in the following ways:

- All decisions will be made by consensus where possible.
- If a consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be delayed until the next meeting, which will occur within thirty days.
- If at that meeting a consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote is required of the quorum present for the proposal to be approved.
- If there is a timeline within which a decision must be reached, an emergency meeting may be called by the chair of the (SAC) prior to the deadline.

- A quorum will be established when the meeting is called to order. A quorum will consist of a minimum of six of the voting members of the SAC and shall include a minimum of one member from each representative group. Representative groups consist of parents/guardians, staff, students, and community members.
- In addition, the principal or designate shall be present. The vice-principal is the designate.

### **School advisory council commitments**

The Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council will be responsible for:

- providing all SAC members with a voice in decision-making
- working in collaboration with the principal and participating in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan
- assisting in developing policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools
- developing strategies to improve and support the extracurricular programs and special projects of the school
- maintaining effective communication with parents/guardians by holding regular public meetings and making copies of agendas and minutes available upon request
- advising the principal and staff on any matters that are referred to the school advisory council by the principal, the regional centre or the Minister
- in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, determining priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council
- advising the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development or the Provincial Advisory Council on policy and other educational matters.
- preparing an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister.

### **Regional centre for education commitments**

ERCE will provide the following support to Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council:

- orientation and in-service sessions for council members, and workshops on special topics upon request
- a facilitator to assist the school council as required
- feedback to the council on the school improvement plan and the annual report
- opportunities to give input on regional centre for education policies and procedures
- meetings between the regional executive director of education or designate and the school advisory council upon request
- copies of policies via the ERCE's website
- mediation services when there is unresolved conflict between the school advisory council and the principal

### **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commitments**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will support the Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council by:

- developing educational materials to assist school advisory councils in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities

- providing opportunities to give input on provincial policies and any other matters referred to the SAC by the Minister
- providing mediation when there is unresolved conflict between the school advisory council and the regional centre for education
- organizing and/or supporting professional development opportunities for council members
- providing funds to support the mandate of the school advisory council

**Parties to the agreement**

We, the undersigned, understand and agree to follow through on the commitments made in this school advisory council agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council Chair

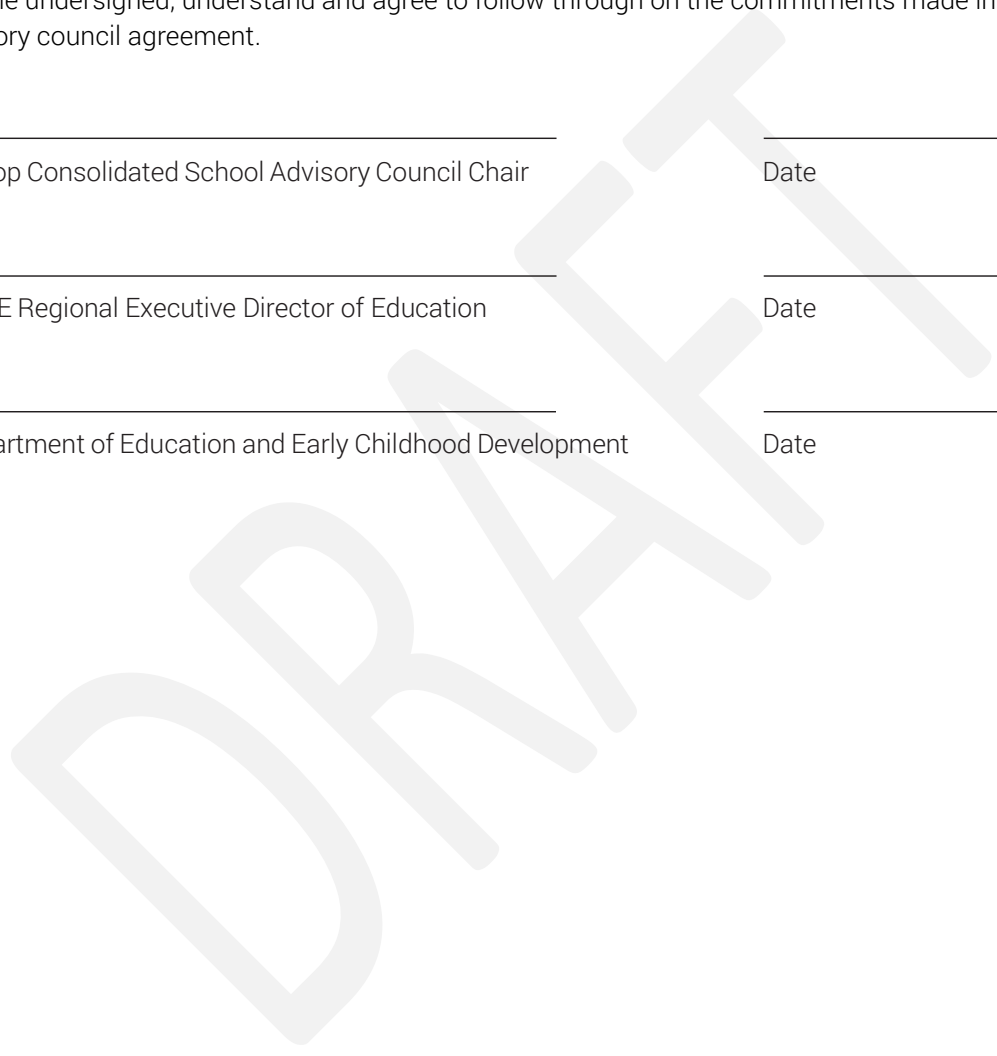
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
ERCE Regional Executive Director of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Sample School Advisory Council Bylaws

School Advisory Council bylaws guide the structure and operations of the SAC. **The following sample is intended to serve as a starting point in helping councils develop their own bylaws and is not meant to be limiting.** All bylaws must comply with legislation and regional centre for education policy and require approval of the regional executive director of education.

### Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council Bylaws

#### Membership

The Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council will have eleven voting members which shall include three parents/guardians, two teachers, one support staff member, two students, three community members, and the principal. The principal is a permanent, non-voting member.

#### Eligibility for membership

##### *Parents/guardians*

- must have a child at Hilltop Consolidated School and cannot be an Eastern Regional Centre for Education (ERCE) employee on staff at Hilltop Consolidated School

##### *Students*

- must include the Student Council president or vice president and a grade seven to nine student elected through an in-school election.

##### *Teachers*

- must be a teacher on staff at Hilltop Consolidated School

##### *Support staff*

- must be on the support staff at Hilltop Consolidated School (e.g., secretary, teacher assistants, duty aides, caretakers, cafeteria workers, bus drivers)

##### *Community members*

- must not be employees of the ERCE
- must not have children registered at Hilltop Consolidated School
- must reside in the geographical area served by Hilltop Consolidated School or provide a service to or within the geographical area served by Hilltop Consolidated School

#### Elections and appointments

Elections will be held in September and are usually by secret ballot. Appointments of community members will occur prior to the October meeting.

##### *Parents/guardians*

A call for nominations may be made during the first two weeks of September through the school website, newsletters sent home with children, and/or the Home and School Association, with a meeting designated for voting in late September. Nominations will close one week prior to a duly advertised voting meeting. Nominations will be received by the school principal and forwarded to the school advisory council chair. Election will be by a simple majority vote of eligible parents/guardians at a designated voting meeting.

Eligible parents/guardians are those who have children enrolled in Hilltop Consolidated School. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will be organized.

#### *Teachers and support staff*

Teachers and support staff will elect/choose their own representatives in September by the method of their choice.

#### *Students*

The student council will select either the President or Vice President to sit on the SAC. The second student representative will be a student from grades seven to nine elected/chosen through an in-school process from among the student's classmates.

#### *Community members*

The community member(s) will be appointed to the school advisory council by the SAC prior to the October meeting so that the executive can be selected. The position(s) will be advertised on the school website and may be advertised in the local newspaper. All applicants may be asked to submit, in writing, a brief resume and a letter which explains why the applicant is interested in being on the school advisory council.

#### Terms of service

Terms of service for each representative group are the following:

- Parents/guardians are elected for a term of three years. Parents/guardians elected or appointed to fill a vacancy are elected or appointed for the remainder of the term.
- Student representatives are elected/chosen for a term of one year.
- Teachers and support staff are elected/chosen from their respective group for a term of three years. Teachers and support staff elected or appointed to fill a vacancy are elected or appointed for the remainder of the term.
- Community members are appointed for a term of two years. Community members appointed to fill a vacancy are appointed for the remainder of the term.
- All members can re-offer for election or appointment to the
- SAC at the end of their term, to a maximum of three consecutive terms.
- The principal position is permanent.
- A council member elected to an executive position may serve
- in that position for a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

#### Vacancies

Should a vacancy arise, it will be addressed as follows:

- Vacancies on the SAC will be filled from the relevant membership group.
- Vacancies of less than six months may be filled by school advisory council appointment.
- Vacancies of longer than six months will be filled according to the bylaws governing elections or appointment of the appropriate membership groups to fill the remainder of the vacated term.

#### Executive

The executive will consist of a chair, vice chair, secretary, and principal. The selection of the chair, vice chair and secretary will be done annually at the October meeting. The chair, vice chair and secretary will be

selected from those school advisory council members other than the principal and will serve no more than two consecutive years as chair, vice chair or secretary.

### Agenda and meeting summary

The chair will draw up the meeting agenda in consultation with the principal five days prior to each meeting. Copies of the agenda will be distributed to each member by email, along with any other information that is relevant to the agenda items. Agendas from each meeting will be kept in Hilltop Consolidated School's records, in either print or electronic format. Agendas will be made available to the public upon request and posted on the school website.

The secretary will prepare a meeting summary for each school advisory council meeting which will include highlights of key decisions and actions. Once approved at the subsequent meeting, the meeting summaries will be given to the principal of Hilltop Consolidated School to be included in the school record in either print or electronic format. Meeting summaries will be made available to the public upon request and posted on the school website.

### Meetings

Meetings will be conducted according to the following guidelines:

- A regular meeting schedule will be determined at the initial meeting of the school year with a minimum of four meetings annually. Additional meetings may be scheduled as determined by the Hilltop Consolidated School SAC. Meetings will be 90 minutes in length unless the SAC agrees by consensus to go longer.
- Members of the public who wish to address the school advisory council are asked to inform the SAC through the chair or the school principal in writing at least one week prior to the school advisory council meeting. They may address the meeting at the discretion of the chair.
- Agendas will allow for a ten-minute period for input on the agenda items from the public in attendance at the council meeting.
- Members who are not able to attend a meeting will notify the school advisory council secretary or the school advisory council chair by noon of the meeting date.
- Any member absent without cause for three consecutive meetings will be considered to have vacated their position. Vacancies will be filled as per these bylaws.

### Quorum

A quorum will be established when the meeting is called to order. A quorum will consist of a minimum of six of the SAC voting members present and shall include a minimum of one representative from each representative group. Representative groups consist of parents/ guardians, students, staff, and community members.

In addition, the principal or the vice principal shall be present.

### Decision-making process

The following principles and procedures will be used in making decisions.

#### Principles

- All council members are responsible for making decisions that ensure the best education possible for our students.
- All council members will have the opportunity to participate in decision-making.
- Council decisions will be by consensus whenever possible.

## Procedures

- Agenda items will be discussed in a structured way prior to a decision.
- When background information is needed on an agenda item, the principal will provide council members with that information and the time required to review it in advance of a decision.
- Whenever possible, decisions will be made by consensus.
- If consensus cannot be reached, the decision can be delayed until the following meeting, which must occur within 30 days. If at that time consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote will be required of those members present.
- Decisions and recommendations will be recorded in the minutes of meetings.

## School improvement plan and annual report

The school improvement plan for Hilltop Consolidated School will be developed by the principal and staff of the school and shared with the SAC. The SAC will work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by regularly receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan.

In addition, in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, the SAC will determine priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council including student achievement and report annually on the expenditures of funds to the Minister.

The SAC will prepare an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister. The report will be presented at the June SAC meeting and then submitted to the regional centre for education by the end of June.

## Adopting and amending bylaws

A notice of motion, given one meeting in advance, is required to amend the bylaws. Bylaws will be amended following the established decision-making process. The amended bylaws will be forwarded to the regional executive director for approval, and the bylaws or amendments become effective upon receipt of this approval.



# Appendix B: Sample Meeting Agenda

## Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council

### MEETING AGENDA

Date, time

1. Call to order
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of meeting summary
4. Business arising from the meeting summary
5. School improvement plan update (standing agenda item)
6. New business (current items)
  - a. Provincial assessment results
  - b. School fees
7. Special reports and/or presentations
  - a. SchoolsPlus services
  - b.
8. Public input
9. Next meeting: date, time
10. Adjournment

# Appendix C: Sample Meeting Summary

## Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### Date, time

1. Attendance (names and positions held)
2. Call to order: Chair; Call to order time:
3. Approval of agenda: (names and position held)
4. Approval of meeting summary: (names and position held)
5. Business arising from the meeting summary
  - a. Seven members of the SAC attended the SAC workshop sponsored by the regional centre for education. Sessions included “how to run a meeting” and “sharing ideas.”
  - b. The principal updated the SAC on the status of the provincial policy on school fees for extracurricular activities, on which the SAC had given input in the spring of the last school year. The updated draft policy will be circulated to SACs for final input within two to three months.
6. School improvement plan update:
  - a. Provincial assessment results: The SAC reviewed data from the RW3, M4 and RWM6 Nova Scotia assessment results (without student names). The data supports our school’s goals in the Student Success Plan.
  - b. The principal reported on the development of the school website, which is part of the communication goal. The SAC reviewed the website and expressed support for the work that has been completed.
7. New business:
  - a. There was a presentation on the provincial School Code of Conduct and the provincial Homework Policy.
  - b. The SAC gave support to the school’s policy on students’ use of electronic devices during class time.
  - c. Representatives from the SAC agreed to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new addition to the playground.
8. Next meeting: date, time
9. Adjournment: time

## Appendix D: Sample Decision-Making Procedures

This is a sample and is not meant to limit SACs in developing their framework. All operations and bylaws, however, must comply with legislation and policies. The following principles and procedures will be used when making SAC decisions.

### Principles

- We will employ democratic approaches in our decision making.
- All SAC members have both a right and responsibility to participate in decision making.
- All members will support SAC decisions once they have been made.
- Consultation will be carried out with parents/guardians, school staff, students, and community members as appropriate.

### Procedures

- We will gather information and consult with partners when appropriate.
- Topics and issues will be discussed in a structured way prior to decision making.
- We will decide on the best method for decision making (e.g., consensus, voting).
- We will attempt to reach a consensus on all SAC decisions. If we cannot reach a consensus, the decision will be tabled until the next meeting.
- Occasionally we will vote on issues when consensus cannot be reached.
- When we use a voting strategy, two thirds will be required for a majority (note: individual SAC bylaws may use a different majority structure).
- If there is not a two-thirds majority, no advice will be given (note: individual SAC bylaws may use a different majority structure).
- When appropriate, we will consult with other representatives of the respective partners and return for a second discussion and decision-making session.
- We will record decisions and methods used in making specific decisions.
- We will inform partners through a newsletter, school website, or by other means.

# Appendix E: School Advisory Council Agreement Approval Criteria

These are the criteria used by regional executive directors and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to assess proposed school advisory council agreements. **They are included here as guidance for SACs drafting their first agreement or revising their current agreement.** See Appendix A: Sample School Advisory Council Agreement and Bylaws.

To be approved by the regional executive director and the department, the agreement must:

- conform to the membership guidelines outlined in Section 71 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations and described in the “School Advisory Council Membership” section in this handbook
- specify the structure of the council
- specify the review period of the agreement
- set out a procedure for decision making
- set out the commitments of the SAC
- set out the commitments of the regional centre for education
- set out the commitments of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- include the signatures of the parties to the agreement: the SAC, the regional executive director and the department
- conform with regional centre for education and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development legislation and policies

The regional executive director will also verify that the school advisory council agreement is accompanied by the SAC's written bylaws.

# Appendix F: School Advisory Council Meeting Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to ensure conduct is respectful and equitable, and that everyone's contributions are valued. Meetings are open to members of the public, and the bylaws should provide guidelines for their participation.

- The chair communicates the meeting time and location to all SAC members. The chair organizes the agenda in collaboration
- with the principal and provides copies of the agenda for the meeting.
- The chair calls the meeting to order.
- The chair recognizes members before they speak.
- All members are provided a fair opportunity to express their opinions on the agenda items.
- Each person should be permitted to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.
- The chair moves the meeting along and ensures it remains focused on the agenda.
- If time does not permit full discussion on an item, it may be tabled for a future meeting.
- Every member is equal and is treated fairly.

## Appendix G: Effective School Advisory Councils

When appointing community members to the SAC, it can be helpful to choose members who can contribute specific expertise.

Where an SAC has student representatives from both junior and senior high schools, drawing from both levels, where possible, allows more varied student input.

Ensure students have opportunities to speak. Some students may be intimidated in a meeting attended mostly by adults. Make certain their concerns are heard and keep the focus on what is most important—the school and students.

Coordinate with other groups. Work together with the school's home and school association, parent/guardian-teacher association, or local volunteer organizations.

Promote your school. Let the students, staff, and community know about what's going on in the school and the positive influence it has on the community as a whole.

Act in the best interest of the students:

- Be open with intentions, opinions, and ideas.
- Strive to provide accurate information.
- Uphold a high level of integrity and courtesy at meetings.
- Adhere to democratic principles.
- Declare any possible conflicts of interest.
- Demonstrate trust and respect for one another.

Create a positive atmosphere in the meetings, the school, and the school community.

# Appendix H: School Advisory Council Election Guidelines

These points are intended to assist in the process of electing SAC members.

- Elections will be conducted as described in the SAC bylaws (by secret ballot or appointment).
- Teacher representatives are to be elected/chosen by teachers.
- Support staff representatives are to be elected/chosen by support staff.
- Student representatives are to be elected/chosen by the student body.
- Parent/guardian representatives are to be elected by parents/ guardians who have children enrolled in the school.
- Community representatives may be appointed by the council or they may be elected.
- When a position on a school advisory council becomes vacant, the vacancy will be filled from the relevant membership group.  
Vacancies of less than six months may be filled by SAC appointment.  
Vacancies of longer than six months will be filled according to the bylaws governing elections or appointment of the appropriate membership groups to fill the remainder of the vacated term.
- Upon formation of the council, it is recommended that elected or appointed members have staggered terms so that a minimum of 50 per cent of the representatives are retained from one year to the next to facilitate continuity. The term for any position will be no longer than three years.
- The chair is elected annually by the SAC from among its members. The chair should normally be a parent/guardian or other community member. The principal is not eligible to be the chair.
- A community representative may not also be a parent/guardian with a child in the school.
- A teacher cannot serve as a parent/guardian or community member representative in a school in which they teach.
- SAC members who are absent for three consecutive meetings may
- be removed from the SAC with a two-thirds vote of the full membership, as stated in the bylaws.
- As an ex officio member, the principal is a non-voting member.

# Appendix I: Frequently Asked Questions

## What are school advisory councils?

A school advisory council (SAC) derives its authority from the Education Act. The SAC advises the principal and school staff, and the regional centre for education, on policies, curriculum and programs, school practices, student support services, fundraising, parent-school communication, and similar matters, and performs other duties as outlined in sections 21 – 22 of the Education Act and sections 68 – 75 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. See Appendix J for specific provisions of the Education Act and Ministerial Education Act Regulations relating to school advisory councils.

## How many members sit on a school advisory council?

School advisory councils shall have at least five and not more than eighteen members, as set out in section 71 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. The decision should be based on factors such as the culture and the size of the school. The membership should reflect the diversity of the school community, including but not limited to African Nova Scotians, First Nations persons, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities.

## Who makes up the membership of the school advisory council?

The school advisory council is made up of parents/guardians; school staff, including teachers and support staff; and students from grades 7 to 12, who are elected/chosen from within their representative groups. Elementary students may be included where appropriate. Community members are usually appointed by the SAC and are not parents/guardians of students or staff within the school.

## What is a school advisory council agreement?

A school advisory council agreement is a signed document that sets out the member composition and responsibilities of the SAC as agreed upon by the members, the regional executive director of education, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. School advisory council agreements are outlined in section 70 of the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

## Who signs the school advisory council agreement and when is it signed?

Once a school advisory council is established and the school advisory council agreement is drafted, it is sent to the regional office staff person responsible for SACs to ensure that the criteria have been addressed. Following the review of the document and consultation with the principal, the school advisory council agreement is submitted to the Regional Education Officer (REO) at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Once the REO's review is complete, the agreement is sent to the regional executive director of education for approval. When all parties are satisfied, the school advisory council agreement is signed by the principal, the chair of the SAC, the regional executive director or designate, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development or designate.

The agreement may be reviewed, along with the SAC bylaws, annually or at other intervals as the SAC may determine. Any changes require that the school advisory council agreement be re-signed by all parties. The bylaws may be changed without being re-signed by all parties, but the regional executive director of education must approve the changes before they take effect.



## Are the decisions of the school advisory council binding?

No, the decisions of the school advisory council are not binding. The SAC is an advisory body, and its purpose is to give advice to the principal and to the regional executive director of education from the point of view of the school community, on behalf of those affected by school decisions.

## How is the SAC executive chosen?

The SAC bylaws should indicate how the executive of the SAC is chosen. There is always a chair and a secretary. The chair should be elected from among the parent/guardian or community representatives. Some SACs may provide for the selection of a vice chair in their bylaws.

## Do school advisory councils have disciplinary power over principals, teachers, and support staff?

No, the school advisory council does not have directive, supervisory, or disciplinary power over the school's principal, teachers, or support staff. These powers rest exclusively with the regional executive director of education. The SAC is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the school.

## What is the legal liability of the School Advisory Council?

The school advisory council is a body authorized by the Education Act to provide advice to the school principal and the regional executive director of education. Therefore, it has no legal liability.

## What is a steering committee or subcommittee?

A steering or subcommittee is a group of people designated by the SAC to perform a specific task. Examples of a steering committee may include SAC membership on a boundary review committee, school review committee, or policy review committee.

## What is the school improvement plan?

The school improvement plan is a document developed under the leadership of the principal to set goals for improved student achievement. All schools will develop goals in literacy and mathematics. The school improvement planning process begins with a review of the evidence to help determine where the school is effective and where improvements are needed. Learning teams comprised of teachers within the school will then work together to contribute to the success of the school improvement plan by focusing on improving student achievement.

The SAC will work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by regularly receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan. In addition, in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, the SAC will determine priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council including student achievement. See Appendix K: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Spending.

## What is the annual report?

The SAC will prepare an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister. The report will be presented at the June SAC meeting and then submitted to the regional centre by the end of June.

## How does a school advisory council communicate with the school community?

An SAC can communicate with the school community in a variety of ways, such as

- posting agendas and meeting summaries on a school bulletin board or school website
- creating an SAC web page linked to the school web page
- including information in the school newsletter
- setting up an information table during parent/ guardian-teacher meetings
- advertising special SAC functions on the school sign
- publicizing the annual report
- hosting school/community engagement sessions

## What is the difference between the school advisory council and the home and school or other parent/guardian-teacher group?

A school advisory council is a legislated body which receives its authority under the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. A home and school association is a volunteer parent/guardian association that may be a member of the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations (NSFHSA), which is recognized by education partners in Nova Scotia as the voice of parents/guardians in schools. Other parent/guardian groups, sometimes referred to as parent-teacher organizations (PTO) or parent-teacher associations (PTA), are also volunteer groups who are associated with their local school. Some school advisory council bylaws reserve a seat on the SAC for a representative of their school's parent-teacher association. Although the mandates of SACs and parent-teacher associations are different, both serve valuable roles in their school communities.

## Who is responsible for education in Nova Scotia? How does the school advisory council factor into the education system?

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for the education of students in the province. Education policy, including the Public School Program and all related services, is set by the Province of Nova Scotia through the minister. The minister oversees the administration of Nova Scotia's public education system. Regional executive directors of education are accountable to the minister through the deputy minister.

The regional executive director of education is responsible for the efficient operation and administration of the regional centre for education office and all schools in the district, and for ensuring that schools comply with provincial laws and policies. The regional director is accountable to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for the educational performance of the students and the schools in the regional centre and shall report to the Minister annually on such performance.

The principal is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for programming and staff. The principal is accountable to the regional executive director. It is the role of the SAC to advise school principals and regional centres for education on policies that each sets out.

## What is the role of the principal with respect to the SAC?

Principals participate in the establishment and operation of a school advisory council. They encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students, and parents/guardians to participate in school decision-making through representation on SACs. SACs work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan. Principals are a valuable resource for the SAC in that they can guide members to appropriate information when required. SACs serve in an advisory role to support principals in making decisions.

## What are the roles of a school advisory council?

The staff, parents/guardians, students, and community members on the SAC work as a team to

- provide advice to the principal on school programs and policies
- communicate with the groups they represent in order to articulate the diverse views that exist within their school community
- represent the best interests of students
- participate in the writing and review of the school advisory council agreement, bylaws, and annual reports
- work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan

# Appendix J: Excerpts Regarding School Advisory Councils from the Education Act and Ministerial Education Act Regulations

The Education Act and Ministerial Education Act Regulations set out the role, duties, and powers of school advisory councils, students, parent/guardians, teachers, principals, regional executive directors of education, support staff, and regional centres for education. Relevant sections of the Act and regulations have been included in this appendix for convenient reference. Where accuracy is important, always refer to the consolidated statutes on the Government of Nova Scotia website, at <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/sol.htm>.

## From the Education Act School Advisory Councils and Regional School Advisory Councils

- 21 (1) A school advisory council may be established in accordance with the regulations for a public school or a group of schools.
- (2) A regional school advisory council may be established in accordance with the regulations to represent two or more groups of schools within a school region or across school regions.
- (3) The composition and powers and duties of a school advisory council or regional school advisory council, and the terms and conditions upon which its members serve, are as prescribed by the regulations.
- 22 A school advisory council or regional school advisory council shall
- (a) assist a regional centre to ensure that the regional centre's public schools and related services are meeting the needs of the communities and regions they serve; and
- (b) perform such other functions as are prescribed by the regulations and as assigned by the Minister or the regional centre.

## Students

- 25 (1) It is the duty of every student enrolled in a public school under the jurisdiction of a regional centre to
- (a) participate fully in learning opportunities;
- (b) attend school regularly and punctually;
- (c) contribute to an orderly and safe learning environment;
- (d) respect the rights of others; and
- (e) comply with the discipline policies of the school and the regional centre.
- (2) A student is accountable to the student's teacher for the student's conduct while under their teachers' supervision.
- (3) A student may participate in decisions that affect the student's school through representation on councils or committees in accordance with regional centre's policy or the regulations.
- (4) It is the right of a student to be informed of the student's educational progress on a regular basis.

- (5) A student of the age of majority may exercise and right that under subsection 23(2) or (3) may be exercised by a parent of the student.

## Parents

- 23 (1) It is the duty of every parent of a child enrolled in a public school under the jurisdiction of a regional centre to
- (a) support the child in achieving learning success;
  - (b) cause the child to attend school as required by the regulations
  - (c) communicate regularly with the child's school;
  - (d) ensure the basic needs of the child are met, including ensuring that their children are well-nourished and well-rested when they go to school; and
  - (e) support the child's teachers in their efforts to provide an education for their children.
- (2) A parent of a child with special needs must be afforded the opportunity to participate in the development of an individualized program for the child.
- (3) Where the parent of a child with special needs does not agree with a decision of a regional centre respecting an individualized program plan for that child, the parent may appeal the decision in accordance with the regulations.

## Teachers

- 42 (1) It is the duty of every teacher in a public school under the jurisdiction of a regional centre to
- (a) respect the rights of students;
  - (b) teach diligently the subjects and courses of study prescribed by the regulations that are assigned to the teacher by the regional centre;
  - (c) implement teaching strategies that foster a positive learning environment aimed at helping students achieve learning outcomes;
  - (d) encourage students in the pursuit of learning;
  - (e) monitor the effectiveness of the teaching strategies by analyzing outcomes achieved;
  - (f) acknowledge and, to the extent reasonable, accommodate differences in learning styles;
  - (g) participate in individual-program planning and implement individual program plans, as required, for students with special needs;
  - (h) review regularly with students their learning expectations and progress;
  - (i) conduct such assessments and evaluations as are necessary to document student progress;
  - (j) administer such evaluation and assessment instruments as required by the regional centre or by the Minister;
  - (k) take all reasonable steps necessary to create and maintain an orderly and safe learning environment;
  - (l) maintain appropriate order and discipline in the school, room or grounds in the teacher's charge and report to the principal or other person in charge of the school the conduct of any student who engages in unacceptable behaviour;
  - (m) maintain an attitude of concern for the dignity and welfare of each student and encourage

in each student an attitude of concern for the dignity and welfare of others and a respect for religion, morality, truth, justice, love of country, humanity, equality, industry, temperance and all other virtues;

- (n) attend to the health, comfort and safety of the students;
  - (o) report immediately to the principal the existence of any infectious or contagious disease in the school or the existence of any unsanitary condition in the school buildings or surroundings, and perform such duties as are from time to time prescribed by or under the Health Protection Act;
  - (p) take all reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students under the teacher's supervision;
  - (q) keep accurate attendance records and report absent students to the principal as prescribed by the regulations;
  - (r) communicate regularly with parents in accordance with policies established by the regional centre;
  - (s) keep such records as are required by the regional centre or the Minister and permit the inspection of those records by the regional centre, the regional executive director or regional executive director's representative, the principal, the supervisor and the Minister or Minister's representative or, upon their request, provide the records to them;
  - (t) assist in the development and implementation of a school improvement plan;
  - (u) maintain the teacher's professional competence;
  - (v) serve, to the extent reasonable, on committees established within the school to improve student achievement and success;
  - (w) implement programs and courses as prescribed by the public school program; and
  - (x) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations.
- (2) A teacher is accountable to the regional centre through the principal of the teacher's assigned school with respect to the performance of the teacher's responsibilities.
- 43 A teacher has general oversight and supervision over school premises during school hours and, subject to the authority of the regional centre and the principal, may exclude from those premises any person who is not a student enrolled in the school and disturbs the learning environment.

## Principals and Vice-Principals

- 39 (1) The principal of a public school under the jurisdiction of a regional centre is the educational leader of the school and has management responsibility for the school, including supervision of teachers and other staff.
- (2) It is the duty of every principal to
- (a) ensure that the public school program and curricula are implemented;
  - (b) keep attendance records respecting every student enrolled at the school and report thereon to the regional executive director as required by the regional executive director;
  - (c) in accordance with policies established by the Minister, take all reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school by the students enrolled in the school.;
  - (d) communicate regularly with the parents of the students;
  - (e) ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive and

- effective learning environment;
- (f) investigate and respond to reports of unacceptable behaviour of students, and, where the principal believes the well-being of a student has been endangered as a result of the unacceptable behaviour of any other student, notify the parents of the students;
  - (g) ensure that Provincial and regional centre policies are followed;
  - (h) identify the staffing needs of the school;
  - (i) assist the regional executive director with the selection and hiring of staff for the school in accordance with policies established by the regional centre;
  - (j) evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff of the school;
  - (k) discipline teachers and other staff of the school in accordance with policies established by the regional centre;
  - (l) assist the regional centre in the development and implementation of professional-development programs;
  - (m) encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students and parents to participate in school decision-making through school advisory councils and committees;
  - (n) participate in the establishment and operation of a school advisory council;
  - (o) assist in the development of school improvement plans and, upon approval by the regional centre, co-ordinate their implementation;
  - (p) account to the regional executive director for money received from the regional centre or any other source;
  - (q) account to the Minister, through the regional executive director, for the performance of the school;
  - (r) co-operate with the staff of other departments to better meet the needs of the students in the school; and
  - (s) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the regional executive director
- (3) A vice-principal may perform any duty of a principal assigned to the vice-principal by the principal, regional executive director or other senior staff of a regional centre, and any other duties prescribed by regulations.
- 40 The regional executive director, or such other senior staff member of the regional centre as the regional executive director may designate, is responsible for the evaluation of principals and vice-principals employed by the regional centre with respect to their duties, including any teaching duties.
- 41 (1) Subject to subsection (2), a principal or vice-principal may perform the duties of a teacher.
- (2) A principal or vice-principal may not spend more than half of the principal's or vice-principal's working hours during a school year performing the duties of a teacher.

### Regional executive directors of education

- 65 (1) The Minister shall appoint a regional executive director of education for a regional centre.
- (2) A regional executive director is an employee of the Department.
- 66 (1) A regional executive director of education is accountable to the Deputy Minister of the Department and, subject to this Act, the regulations and the direction of the Minister, has overall responsibility for

- (a) the efficient operation of the regional centre office and the public schools and services in the school region;
  - (b) the supervision of all employees of the regional centre; and
  - (c) the educational performance of the students and schools in the school region.
- (2) It is the duty of every regional executive director to
- (a) administer and evaluate the programs offered by the regional centre;
  - (b) oversee the carrying out of Provincial policies and the regional centre's policies;
  - (c) ensure that schools in the school region adhere to the public school program;
  - (d) maintain a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment in all schools in the school region;
  - (e) provide leadership in the school region and work closely with principals and staff in promoting quality education, enhanced community involvement and the efficient delivery of the public school program and related services;
  - (f) establish performance standards and a process for the supervision and evaluation of staff;
  - (g) co-operate with other education entities, the Department and other departments to ensure the effective and efficient carrying out of this Act and the regulations;
  - (h) report annually on the performance of the students and schools in the school region and upon other matters as the Minister may direct; and
  - (i) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the Minister.

## Support Staff

- 52 (1) It is the duty of a support staff member of a regional centre to
- (a) support students in their participation in school activities;
  - (b) maintain an attitude of concern for the dignity and welfare of each student;
  - (c) co-operate with the regional centre, regional executive director, principal, teachers, students and other staff members to maintain an orderly, safe and supportive learning environment;
  - (d) report to the principal or other person in charge of a school the conduct of any student who engages in unacceptable behavior;
  - (e) respect the rights of students;
  - (f) participate in staff-development opportunities identified by the person to whom the staff member reports, if requested to do so; and
  - (g) subject to any applicable collective agreement in effect when this Act comes into force, perform such other duties as are
  - (h) assigned by the regional centre, the regional executive director or the principal.
- (2) Every support staff member employed in a school is accountable to the principal or other person designated by the regional centre.

## General Responsibilities and Powers of Regional Centres for Education

- 54 The Minister is hereby constituted a corporation sole as a regional centre with respect to each of the former regional school boards dissolved by this Act.



- 55 (1) The Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister, may
- (a) establish or dissolve a regional centre or amalgamate a regional centre with another regional centre;
  - (b) designate a geographic area of the Province as a school region to be served by a regional centre;
  - (c) alter the boundaries of a school region;
  - (d) annex the whole or any part of a school region to another school region; and
  - (e) determine the name of a regional centre or a school region.
- (2) The exercise by the Governor in Council of the authority contained in subsection (1) is a regulation within the meaning of the Regulations Act.
- 56 A regional centre has the capacity and, subject to this Act and the regulations, the rights, powers and privileges of a natural person.
- 57 For the purpose of this Act and in the exercise of the powers of a regional centre and the carrying out of the objects of a regional centre, the Minister is an agent of Her Majesty in right of the Province.
- 58 Actions, suits or other legal proceedings with respect to any right or obligation acquired or incurred by a regional centre may be brought or taken by or against the regional centre in the name of the regional centre in the manner provided by the Proceedings Against the Crown Act for an action against Her Majesty in right of the Province.
- 59 A regional centre, its property and assets are not subject to taxation.
- 60 For the purpose of Sections 80 and 81 of the Municipal Government Act and Sections 103 and 104 of the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, property vested in a regional centre is considered to be the property of Her Majesty in right of the Province.
- 61 The objects of a regional centre are to
- (a) promote excellence in education and the achievement of all students enrolled in its schools and programs;
  - (b) manage and control its public schools, programs and related services in the school region under its jurisdiction;
  - (c) provide for the education and instruction of all students enrolled in its schools and programs in accordance with this Act and the regulations;
  - (d) facilitate vibrant community involvement in the effective delivery of education, including engagement and consultation with school advisory councils on issues within the prescribed mandate of the school advisory councils; and
  - (e) represent regional perspectives in the development of provincial and local policies and programs.
- 62 A regional centre may, in pursuit of its objects,
- (a) work with and share services with another regional centre, the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, the Bureau or a department;
  - (b) hire, pay, promote, demote, reassign, discipline and dismiss staff of the regional centre;
  - (c) acquire, hold and dispose of personal and real property;
  - (d) enter into agreements with any persons, municipalities, organizations or governments to advance the purpose of this Act, administer programs or provide for services;

- (e) where directed by the Minister, provide such programs and services as the Minister considers desirable; and
- (f) subject to the direction of the Minister, do such things as may be necessary for or incidental to the attainment of its objects and the exercise of its powers.

63 The operations of a regional centre are to be supported by the Department and may be supported by the Bureau as and in the manner prescribed by the Minister.

64 Under the direction of the Minister, the Deputy Minister of the Department shall

- (a) supervise the administration and management of the regional centres; and
- (b) perform such duties as the Minister or the Governor in Council assigns to the Deputy Minister.

## From the Ministerial Education Act Regulations

### Interpretation for Sections 69 to 75

**68 (1)** In Sections 69 to 75,

“school advisory council” means a school advisory council for a public school as provided for in subsection 21(1) of the Act;

“school advisory council agreement” means an agreement made between a school advisory council, the regional centre and the Minister under subsection 70(1).

**(2)** In sections 69 to 75,

- (a) a reference to a principal in relation to a public school or a school advisory council for a public school is a reference to the principal of that public school;
- (b) a reference to a regional centre in relation to a public school or a school advisory council for a public school is a reference to the regional centre with jurisdiction over that public school.

### Establishing school advisory council

**69 (1)** A principal may establish a school advisory council for a public school if the principal determines that it would benefit the public school,

**(2)** A principal must establish a school advisory council in any of the following circumstances:

- (a) a school advisory council was established for the public school before July 31, 2018, and was operating as a school advisory council during the school academic year ending on July 31, 2018, under an agreement under the former Act;
- (b) any of the following groups petitions the principal in writing to establish a school advisory council:
  - (i) a home and school association, parent-teacher association, or similar organization for the public school,

- (ii) 5 or more parents of students attending the public school.

### School advisory council agreements

- 70 (1) A school advisory council must enter into an agreement with the regional centre and the Department that sets out all of the following:
- (a) the composition of the school advisory council, in accordance with Section 71;
  - (b) the duties of the school advisory council as prescribed by section 75.
- (2) A school advisory council, the regional centre or the Department may amend the school advisory council agreement at any time with the consent of both of the other parties.

### Composition of a school advisory council

- 71 (1) A school advisory council must have at least 5 and not more than 18 members.
- (2) Subject to subsections (3), (4) and (5), a school advisory council must consist of the following persons:
- (a) at least 1 parent of a child attending a school elected by the parents of the children attending the school;
  - (b) at least 1 teacher employed at the school elected by the teachers employed at the school;
  - (c) at least 1 person from the support staff employed at the school elected by the support staff;
  - (d) the principal, who is a non-voting member of the school advisory council;
  - (e) at least 1 representative of the community in which the school is situated who must be named to the school advisory council by 1 of the following methods:
    - (i) appointment by the school advisory council, taking into consideration the importance of having diverse views represented on the school advisory council;
    - (ii) election by members of the community, if the school advisory council agreement requires the community representative to be elected;
  - (f) if the school has students attending the school in grade 7 or a higher grade, at least 2 students who attend the school elected by the students of the school;
  - (g) if the school has students attending the school only in grades up to grade 6 or a lower grade and the school advisory council agreement provides for the election of a student member, at least 2 students who attend the school elected by the students of the school.

- (3) Unless the school advisory council agreement provides otherwise, a school advisory council must not have more than 1/3 of its members from any single category of members referred to in subsection (2).
- (4) A school advisory council member must not be senior staff, as defined in Section 56, of the regional centre.
- (5) Except as provided in subsection (8), a school advisory council may vary in its membership composition during a school academic year to increase the diversity of the membership of the school advisory council and to allow for representatives from traditionally under-represented members of the school community.
- (6) A school advisory council must provide notice to the regional centre of its intent to vary its membership composition under subsection (5).
- (7) A school advisory council may maintain a variance under subsection (5) until the composition provisions of the school advisory council agreement are amended.
- (8) Subsection (5) does not apply to a newly established school advisory council whose composition has been determined in the manner prescribed by the regional centre as described in Section 73.

#### School advisory council established to replace predecessor under former Act

- 72** Until a new school advisory council agreement is entered into, a school advisory council established under clause 69(2)(a) to replace one that was established under the former Act operates under the same terms and conditions and has the same composition as set out in the predecessor school advisory council's agreement under the former Act.

#### Newly established school advisory council

- 73** Until a school advisory council agreement is entered into for a school advisory council newly established for a public school under subsection 69(1) or clause 69(2)(b),
- (a) the composition of the school advisory council must be determined in the manner prescribed by the regional centre in accordance with the requirements of clauses 71(2)(a) to (f) respecting minimum numbers and categories of members; and
  - (b) the first members of the school advisory council must be elected according to a process established by the regional centre.

#### Vacancy on the school advisory council

- 74** A vacancy on the school advisory council does not impair the authority of the remaining members to act.

#### Duties of the school advisory council

- 75** The following are prescribed under subsection 21(3) of the Act as the duties of a school advisory council:

- (a) advising the principal and the regional centre on the following matters:
  - (i) developing policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools;
  - (ii) school practices and initiatives;
  - (iii) communication among the school, parents and the community;
  - (iv) any matters that are referred to the school advisory council by the principal, the regional centre or the Minister;
- (b) working in collaboration with the principal and participating in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan;
- (c) preparing an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister;
- (d) subject to the approval of the regional centre, making by-laws respecting the operations of the school advisory council, including electing members and conducting meetings;
- (e) participating in Provincial and regional meetings, consultations and professional development opportunities offered for school advisory councils by the Minister, the regional centre or another education entity;
- (f) in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, determining priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council;
- (g) undertaking any responsibilities assigned by the Minister or the regional centre in addition to the responsibilities set out in the school advisory council agreement.

# Appendix K: School Advisory Council Spending Guidelines

This information is intended to assist school advisory councils (SACs) in their budgeting of provincial funding provided to support their mandates.

## Calculation of Funding

- An annual funding allocation of \$5,000, plus one dollar per student, will be provided to each school with an SAC. If an SAC represents multiple schools, each school will receive its own budget of \$5,000 plus one dollar per student. The SAC will decide how this funding will be spent for each school.
- The regional centres for education (RCEs) and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) will each maintain a registry of the SACs for schools within their jurisdiction. The registries will be used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, RCEs, and CSAP to guide funding distribution.

## Funding Parameters

- Annual funding will be provided to SACs for use during the current school year. Funds are not intended to carry-over for use in subsequent years.
- Funding will be managed according to existing RCE and CSAP policies. SACs will not establish a bank account to hold these funds. Principals will manage this funding the same as they do their other school funds (e.g., student support grants).
- SAC funding decisions should be made during meetings.
- While an SAC may serve more than one school (i.e., a joint or regional SAC), funding must be spent at the school it was allocated to.

## Reporting

- Any funds used by SACs must be accounted for and reported on. The SAC Handbook includes an annual report template with guidance on financial reporting. If further guidance on financial reporting is needed SAC members should approach the school principal, who may then refer them to the SAC representative at their RCE.
- All expenditures must fit into one of the three spending categories below:
  - a. supporting the school improvement plan (e.g., providing resources to support math and literacy instruction).
  - b. supporting policy development and implementation (e.g., supporting and promoting new policies).
  - c. covering operational expenses. Up to 20 per cent of provincial SAC funding may be used as operational expenses, if necessary, to encourage and support member participation.

# Appendix L: School Advisory Council Annual Report Template

An annual report is a great opportunity for school advisory councils (SACs) to communicate with the school community regarding the SAC's activities and impact on student achievement.

The annual report should include the following information:

- a list of SAC members including names, membership type (i.e., parent, community member, staff.), and role (i.e., Chair, Vice Chair)
- a summary of work undertaken by the SAC to improve student achievement and school performance
- any significant milestones and success stories that the SAC would like to highlight
- any related sub-committee work undertaken by SAC members (e.g., School Options Committee)
- a statement of revenues and expenditures, including reporting on spending grouped into the following categories:
  - supporting the school improvement plan (e.g., providing resources to support math and literacy instruction);
  - supporting policy development and implementation (e.g., supporting and promoting new policies)
  - covering operational expenses; up to 20 per cent of provincial SAC funding may be used as operational expenses, if necessary, to encourage and support member participation

A copy of the annual report should be submitted by the SAC Chair to the regional centre for education or Conseil scolaire acadien provincial before the end of the school year.