

NOVA SCOTIA School Advisory Council Handbook



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Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

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Prepared by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Success for every student is a top priority in Nova Scotia's public schools. Principals, teachers, students, parents/guardians, school support staff, communities, regional centres for education (RCEs), the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) must work together to reach this goal and create opportunities for meaningful involvement in decision-making. Together, as partners, they can focus on improving student achievement and school performance.

School advisory councils (SACs) are one way to bring together school stakeholders and individuals from local communities who share an interest in promoting student success in their school. SACs are volunteer organizations that receive their authority from the Education Act (2018). The establishment of SACs and their roles and responsibilities are set out in the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

SACs are an integral part of Nova Scotia's public schools. They provide parents/guardians, school staff, community members, and, when appropriate, students, with a voice to influence decisions that impact student learning. As advisory bodies, SACs bring partners together to provide principals and RCEs with advice that reflects the best interests of students from the point of view of the school community.

SACs are active participants in the school improvement planning process, also known as the Student Success Planning process. The provincial school improvement planning process ensures SACs have a role in the ongoing efforts of schools to improve student achievement and well-being. The school improvement plan is developed under the leadership of the principal to set goals and strategies to improve student achievement and well-being. The process begins by reviewing available evidence to determine how the students are doing and where improvements are needed.

SACs work in collaboration with principals and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and well-being by regularly receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress. SACs determine spending priorities for the provincial funds allocated to support their mandate, including student achievement, according to the terms of their SAC Agreement.

This handbook is designed to support SAC members, both new and experienced, by establishing a common vision of the role and responsibilities of SACs. It describes SACs and provides information, guidelines, and samples of SAC documents so that all members can perform their roles effectively.

Additional resources and information are available to SACs at www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC and in the Resources section at the end of this document.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for establishing policies, priorities, and standards for the administration of the public education system
Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsible for promoting and advancing EECD's mandate and supervising the administration and management of the RCEs
Regional Executive Directors of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accountable to the Deputy Minister and to follow policy directions from 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 implementing provincial policies oversee the daily administration of their schools and regional offices
Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> report to their regional executive director of education (RED) responsible to their school communities provide leadership for all aspects of their school
School advisory councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise their school principal and RCE on issues related to their school and the overall education system

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development oversees the administration of the public education system and is responsible for the overall education of students in the province. Education policy, including the *Public School Program* and all related services, is set by the department through the Minister. Under the direction of the Minister, the Deputy Minister works to promote EECD's mandate and oversees the management of the RCEs.

Regional Executive Directors of Education (REDs) are responsible for the efficient operation and administration of the RCE offices and all schools within their regions and for ensuring that schools comply with provincial laws and policies. They are accountable to the Deputy Minister for students' educational performance and for ensuring the schools in their jurisdiction report annually on their performance.

Principals are the educational leaders of schools and have the overall responsibility for programming and staff. They are accountable to their RED. SACs provide advice to school principals, and RCEs. They may also be consulted on occasion by EECD.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SACs derive their authority from the Education Act. The Act, along with the Ministerial Education Act Regulations, set out the roles, duties, and powers of SACs, students, parent/guardians, teachers, support staff, principals, REDs, and RCEs. SACs are bodies authorized by the Act to provide advice to school principals and their RED, and therefore, have no legal liability.

SACs advise their principal and RCE on policies, curriculum and programs, school practices, student support services, parent-school communication, and perform other duties as outlined in the Act and Regulations. Each RCE also has a staff person who is responsible for supporting SACs. SACs play a meaningful role in their school(s) by

- advising principals, RCEs, and, as needed, EECD, on the following matters:
 - policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools
 - school practices and initiatives
 - communication with school staff, parents/guardians, and community members
 - other matters that are referred to SACs by principals, RCEs, or the Minister
- working in collaboration with principals and participating in efforts to improve student achievement, as well as 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 with information determined by the Minister, which is approved as part of the final SAC meeting of the school year, provided to the RCE, and made available to the public (e.g., as part of the meeting summary).
- entering into an SAC Agreement with the RCE and EECD which sets out the membership composition of the council and the responsibilities of all partners.
- making bylaws respecting the operations of the SAC, subject to the approval of the RCE.
- participating in provincial and regional meetings, consultations, and professional development opportunities offered for SACs by the Minister, RCEs, or other education entities.
- determining spending priorities for the funds allocated to support the SAC's mandate, in accordance with the terms of the SAC agreement.
- undertaking any responsibilities assigned by the Minister or RCEs, in addition to the responsibilities set out in SAC agreements and legislation.

The SAC does not have a role in

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

Guiding Principles

SACs should be guided by the following principles:

- education is a shared responsibility.
- the best interests of students must be the first consideration when making decisions.
- stakeholders at the school level have important perspectives that should be considered when making decisions.
- school improvement leads to increased student achievement.
- school policies should account for the unique characteristics of each school community.
- education partners need to work together to manage change effectively.
- involving the school community in school improvement planning enhances learning for all students.

Differences Between School Advisory Councils and Other Parent/Guardian Groups

SACs are advisory bodies under legislation and provide recommendations to improve school performance and student success. Home and school associations are volunteer parent/guardian groups that may be members of the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations, 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 (PTOs) or parent-teacher associations (PTAs), are also volunteer groups associated with their local school. Some SACs have bylaws that reserve a seat on the council for a representative from their school's PTO or PTA. Although the mandates of SACs and parent groups are different, each serve a valuable role in their school communities.

School Improvement Planning (Student Success Planning)

The leadership of principals and the support of the school community are important when developing a school improvement plan, also known as a Student Success Plan. Principals lead and are accountable for the development and implementation of the plan. Effective school improvement planning relies on distributed leadership among teachers, as well as the shared commitment of school support staff, SACs, parents/guardians, students, and community members.

School improvement planning begins with a review of data and evidence to help determine where improvements are needed. This evidence is used to determine student achievement and well-being goals.

Goals need to be specific enough to be measurable and broad enough to include all students. School improvement planning identifies ways to support the implementation of the plan and evaluate growth.

SACs work in collaboration with principals and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and the well-being of students and communities by:

- receiving information on the school improvement plan
- monitoring the progress and improvement of the identified goal areas

School Advisory Council Agreements

SAC Agreements are signed documents that set out the member composition of an SAC and the responsibilities of its partners. The agreement must be signed by the chair of the SAC, its RED, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development (or designate). The content required for SAC Agreements is outlined in the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

Developing an initial SAC Agreement is the responsibility of the first members of an SAC. The agreement may be reviewed, along with the bylaws, annually or at other intervals as each SAC determines. Legislation provides that agreements may be amended from time to time by an SAC's membership. Any changes require the approval of all partners (i.e., the SAC, the RED, EECD). If one of the partners wishes to propose a change to an SAC's agreement, the RCE staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted as early in the process as possible. Examples of SAC Agreements are available on the SAC website.

To be approved by the RED and EECD, SAC Agreements must state

- the effective date and review schedule for the agreement
- the SAC's decision-making process
- the structure and composition of the SAC
- the SAC's commitments
- the RCE's commitments
- EECD's commitments

and

- conform to the membership guidelines outlined in the Regulations and the ones described in the School Advisory Council Membership section of this handbook
- conform with RCE and EECD legislation and policies
- include the signatures of the parties to the agreement: the SAC chair, the RED, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development (or designate)

The criteria above are included as guidance for SACs to use when drafting their first agreement or revising their current agreement.

An SAC's RED will verify that its agreement is accompanied by its bylaws.

Bylaws

SACs also develop their own bylaws upon inception. Bylaws are written rules, definitions, and procedures that guide the election of members, the conduct of meetings, and the operations of the council. Bylaws should provide guidance on

- membership structure
- determining membership eligibility
- electing and appointing members
- setting terms of office for members
- filling membership vacancies
- electing executives (e.g., chair, secretary)
- preparing meeting agendas and summaries
- running meetings
- defining quorum
- appointing subcommittees to perform specific tasks
- making decisions
- preparing annual reports
- communicating with partners
- determining spending priorities for the funds allocated to support the SAC's mandate
- resolving conflicts related to membership structure, member elections, and adhering to the agreement and bylaws
- allowing members of the public to participate in meetings
- adopting and amending bylaws

When changes are proposed to the bylaws, the RCE staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted as early in the process as possible. The bylaws may be changed with approval from the RED. **It is important that an SAC's agreement and bylaws are aligned with each other.** Examples of SAC bylaws are available on the SAC website.

DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES EXAMPLE

Note: This is an example and is not meant to limit SACs in developing their own procedures.

All SAC operations and bylaws must comply with current legislation and policies. These principles and procedures will be used by SACs when making decisions.

Principles

- Members of the SAC will employ democratic approaches in their 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.
- Consultations will be carried out with parents/guardians, school staff, students, and community members when appropriate.

Procedures

- Members of the SAC will gather information and consult with partners when appropriate.
- Topics and issues will be discussed in a structured way prior to decision-making.
- Members of the council will decide on the best method for decision-making (e.g., consensus, voting).
- Members of the SAC will attempt to reach consensus on all decisions. If a consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be tabled until the next meeting.
- Occasionally members will vote on issues when consensus cannot be reached.
- When members of the SAC use a voting strategy, two-thirds is required for a majority.

Note: Individual SAC bylaws can use different majority structures.

- If there is not a two-thirds majority, no advice will be given.

Note: Individual SAC bylaws can use different majority structures.

- When appropriate, SAC members may consult with other representatives of the respective partner groups and return for a second discussion and decision-making session.
- SACs will record decisions and methods used when making specific decisions.
- Members of the council will inform partners of decisions through newsletters, school websites, or other means.

Note: The decisions of SACs are not binding. SACs are advisory bodies, and their purpose is to provide advice to principals and RCEs from the point of view of the school community, on behalf of those affected by school decisions.

Policy and Consultation

SACs are encouraged to have a strong voice in policy development. If SACs have feedback on specific regional or provincial policies, they should submit the feedback, in writing, to the SAC representative at their RCE.

On occasion, RCEs or EECD may solicit feedback on regional and provincial policies that impact student achievement and well-being directly from SACs. Whenever possible, RCEs and EECD will try to provide enough time to engage all SACs in consultation. However, there will be occasions when circumstances require consultation to occur within an abbreviated timeline. Some of the ways SACs may be engaged in policy consultation include:

- online surveys
- requests for volunteers to participate in in-person or online consultation sessions
- participation in regional or provincial meetings

Whenever possible, SACs will be informed on how their feedback has influenced policy development.

ESTABLISHING A COUNCIL

SACs may be established for individual schools, or for two or more schools that choose to work together. The steps to establish an SAC are outlined below.

Step 1: Hold an initial meeting.

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

Principals serve as the chair of the initial meeting until a permanent SAC chair is elected by the membership. The agenda for the meeting should include, but is not limited to

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

Step 2: Election and appointment of members.

Once the procedures for the establishment of the SAC are agreed upon, the attendees should move ahead with the election process for parent/guardian, school staff, and student members and the appointment process for community members.

Step 3: Define the operating procedures for the SAC.

During the first meeting with the elected and appointed representatives, the group should define its operating procedures including

- electing an executive, including a chair
- determining a meeting schedule
- discussing strategies for communicating with partners
- establishing a decision-making structure

Decision-making structures set out which decisions will be under the authority of the SAC, how decisions will be made, and who will be involved in the decision-making and consultation processes. They clearly communicate the procedures of the SAC, including when decisions are made by consensus, consultation, or vote. The preferred model for important decisions is consensus.

Step 4: Write the SAC Agreement.

SACs, REDs, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development must enter into an agreement setting out the composition and responsibilities of an SAC as outlined in the Ministerial Education Act Regulations. Each SAC will have an agreement that describes the specific commitments each of the partners makes to support student achievement.

Once an SAC is established and the agreement is drafted, it is sent to the RCE staff person responsible for SACs to ensure that the required information has been included. Following the agreement's review by the RCE's staff person and consultation with the principal, the unsigned draft is submitted to the appropriate Regional Education Officer (REO) at EECD.

The REO will review the draft for completeness and may suggest further edits before finalizing it. Once the draft agreement is approved by the REO, it is returned to the SAC chair for their signature. The signed agreement is then sent to the RED for their signature, and then to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development or their designate to be signed.

Step 5: Develop bylaws for the SAC.

SACs also develop their own sets of bylaws upon their creation. Bylaws are written rules, definitions, and procedures that guide the election and appointment of SAC members, the conduct of meetings, and the SAC's operations. Bylaws must not contradict the Regulations or the SAC's agreement. SAC bylaws should indicate the council's process for the periodic review of the bylaws. When changes to the bylaws are proposed, the RCE staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted early in the process. All changes must be approved by the RED.

How to Be an Effective Council

Effective SACs act in the best interest of students and

- are open with their 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 members.
- create a positive atmosphere during meetings, at school, and in the school community.

MEMBERSHIP

SACs must have at least five members and must not exceed more than 18. The number of members a council has should be based on factors such as the culture and the size of the school. SACs are made up of parents/guardians; school staff, including teachers and support staff; students from grades 7–12 (elementary students may be included when appropriate); and community members.

SAC members may be elected or appointed for terms that do not normally exceed three years. Most of the members of the council are elected from within their representative groups, including parents/guardians, school staff, and students. Members from each group are elected by their peers: parents/guardians elect parents/guardians, school staff elect school staff, and students elect students. School staff are not eligible to serve on their school's SAC as parents/guardians or community members.

Community members are appointed by SACs and must not be school staff or parents/guardians of students. When appointing community members to SACs, it is helpful to choose members who contribute specific expertise, skills, or knowledge that is needed. No single membership group can make up more than one-third of the SAC membership, unless the SAC Agreement provides otherwise.

SAC membership parameters

- minimum of five members, maximum of 18
- must include representation from the following membership groups
 - parents/guardians
 - school staff
 - community members
- minimum of two students are required on SACs for schools with grades 7–12
 - when SACs represent students from both junior and senior high schools, draw from both levels if possible
- the term “school staff” includes teachers and support staff
- no single group can make up more than one-third of the SAC membership, unless it is otherwise specified in the agreement
- principals (or their designates) are non-voting members

Efforts should be made to ensure council membership reflects the diversity of the community served by the school. This includes, but is not limited to

- African Nova Scotians
- Indigenous peoples
- other racially visible persons
- persons with disabilities

SACs may choose to designate seats in one or more of their membership groups to represent their community's diversity through their agreement and bylaws. When a home and school association or parent-teacher group also exists in a school, SACs may choose to designate a seat for a member from this organization through its agreement and bylaws.

The membership composition of SACs can look very different. Here are two examples:

Elementary SAC with seven members

- principal
- two parents/guardians
- two school staff members (one teacher and one support staff member)
- two community members

Junior and senior high SAC with 11 members

- principal
- three parents/guardians
- three school staff members (two teachers, one support staff member)
- two students
- two community members

School principals are non-voting members and cannot serve as chair. When principals are unable to attend meetings, vice principals or a designate of the school administration is required to serve in place of the principal as a non-voting member.

A membership vacancy on the SAC does not impede the function of the council; however, vacancies should be filled as soon as possible as per the process outlined in the SAC's bylaws.

Election Guidelines

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

- elections will be conducted as described in an SAC's bylaws (e.g., secret ballot, appointment).
- school staff must be elected by school staff.
- student representatives must be elected by the student body.
- parent/guardian representatives must be elected by parents/guardians with children enrolled in the school.
- community representatives are appointed by the council.
- when a position on an SAC becomes vacant (e.g., if a member resigns early), the vacancy must 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 appointments of the appropriate membership groups to fill the remainder of the term.
- upon formation of the council, it is recommended that elected and 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 provide continuity. The term for any position must be no longer than three years.
- SAC chairs are elected annually by SAC members. Ideally, chairs should not be school staff members. Principals are not eligible to be the chair.
- community members of the council must not also be a parent/guardian with a child in the school.
- school staff cannot serve in parent/guardian or community member roles on an SAC at a school where they work.
- SAC members who are absent for three consecutive meetings may be removed from the council as stated in the bylaws.
- principals, or their designates, are non-voting members.

Defined Roles of Members

SACs include designated leadership and support roles that contribute to their effective operations.

Chair

The chair of an SAC represents the council and ensures open lines of communication within their SAC and with their RED, school(s), parents/guardians, and communities. The chair collaborates with the principal in an advisory role and together they establish the agendas for meetings.

SAC chairs should have a good understanding of the role and responsibilities of SACs, their SAC's bylaws and agreement, how to conduct effective meetings, as well as how to develop a well-functioning SAC.

The chair organizes, calls to order, and facilitates each meeting. They also ensure the agenda is followed, the bylaws are respected, and that all members are encouraged to contribute their own perspectives, interests, and concerns to the discussion. The chair helps the SAC reach consensus and resolve conflicts, and assists the principal in communicating to partner groups regarding the annual report.

Vice chair

It is optional for SACs to have a vice chair. Vice chairs act as chair when the chair is absent.

Secretary

SAC secretaries are responsible for recording and distributing the meeting summaries. They ensure the summaries are available to the public (e.g., on the school website).

Principal

Principals are non-voting members of SACs and are expected to attend all SAC meetings. Principals attend regional and provincial SAC events when possible.

SACs are advisory bodies to schools and principals; therefore, principals cannot serve as chair, nor do they count towards meeting quorum. Principals collaborate with the SAC chair to prepare meeting agendas and are a valuable resource for SAC members because they can guide them to appropriate information. SACs provide advice to support the decision-making role of principals.

Other roles of principals may 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's preparation of its annual report in the required template and ensuring the report contains the information determined by the Minister.
- collaborating with the chair when communicating about the annual report.
- supporting reviews of the SAC Agreement and bylaws.
- consulting with SACs on educational issues.
- supporting professional development opportunities organized for SACs by the Minister, RCEs, or other education partners.
- communicating with the RCE and EECD on behalf of the SAC.
- other roles as required.

All members

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

- provide advice to principals on school programs and policies.

- communicate with the groups they represent to articulate the diverse views that exist within their school communities.
- represent the best interests of students.
- participate in the writing and review of the SAC Agreement, bylaws, and annual report.
- work in collaboration with principals 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.
- ensure that the SAC Agreement and bylaws are followed.

Roles of Supporting Partners

Regional Executive Directors of Education

REDs provide ongoing support to SACs by

- supporting their ongoing work.
- reviewing and approving individual SAC Agreements and bylaws.
- recommending SAC Agreements for approval to EECD.
- consulting with SACs on educational issues, as set out in the Education Act and the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.
- organizing and supporting professional development opportunities for council members.
- monitoring and supporting SAC performance.
- advising on or resolving conflicts related to SACs.
- ensuring that SACs adhere to their agreements and bylaws.
- receiving the SAC annual reports.
- requesting advice from SACs on policies and other matters, in accordance with the Education Act and Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

EECD supports SACs by

- developing resources to assist them in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.
- providing a provincial model and framework for school improvement.
- providing funds to support the mandate of the SACs.
- organizing and supporting professional development opportunities for members.
- providing mediation when there is unresolved conflict between an SAC and the RCE.
- approving SAC Agreements.

MEETING GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to ensure conduct at SAC meetings is respectful and equitable, and that each member's contributions are valued. All meetings are open to members of the public. The SAC's bylaws should provide guidelines for public participation. The chair facilitates the meeting and ensures it remains focused on the agenda.

Before the meeting

1. The chair organizes the agenda in collaboration with the principal and provides council members with copies of the agenda for the meeting.
2. The chair communicates the meeting time and location to all SAC members.

At the meeting

1. The chair calls the meeting to order.
2. The chair recognizes members before they speak.
3. All members should be provided a fair opportunity to express their opinions on the agenda items.
4. Each member should be permitted to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.
5. If time does not permit full discussion on an item, it may be tabled for a future meeting.
6. Every member is equal and is treated fairly.
7. The chair ensures all members, including students, have opportunities to speak.

Meeting Overview

Scheduling

The time and date of all SAC meetings, including the annual general meeting (if an SAC chooses to hold one), should be decided at the first meeting of the school year.

Agenda

The preparation of meeting agendas is the responsibility of the chair, in consultation with the principal. The agenda states the order of business and topics for discussion. See below for an example.

Meeting summaries

Meeting summaries are written records of meetings. SAC meeting summaries are compiled by the secretary and should be brief highlights of key decisions and actions, not a verbatim transcript. Summaries should be available to all SAC members before the next regular meeting, where they can be approved or revised. After they're approved, the summaries should be posted in a place accessible to all members of the school community, such as the school website. See below for an example.

Note: The meeting schedule, agendas, and summaries must be made available to the public.

Records created by SACs during the course of their work may be subject to the Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) Act. More information on the Act can be obtained from the RCE's Information Access and Privacy manager.

MEETING AGENDA EXAMPLE

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council

MEETING AGENDA

Date, time

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

MEETING SUMMARY EXAMPLE

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 previous meeting's summary: (names and position held)
5. Business arising from the meeting summary
 - a. Seven members of the SAC attended an SAC workshop sponsored by the RCE. 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 our school improvement plan (Student Success Plan).
 - b. The principal reported on the development of the school website, which is part of our 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

Quorum

Council quorum is usually a simple majority of its members with at least one member from each representative group, unless otherwise stated in the bylaws. The principal (or their designate) is not counted when determining quorum.

Decision-making

SACs determine their own processes for making decisions and define those processes in their bylaws. Some decisions, such as approving the meeting summaries, may be made by a simple vote. Other decisions may be made more appropriately by consensus. As advisory bodies, SACs are encouraged to seek consensus in most decisions.

Conflict resolution

Disputes within SACs that cannot be resolved internally may be referred to the RCE staff person responsible for SACs.

Communication

Communication is very important to effective SAC operations. This includes communication between SACs and the school community, their RCE, and EECD. Communication can be meeting summaries, synopses of activities in the school newsletter, updates through the local media, public service announcements about upcoming meetings, or through other community communication hubs.

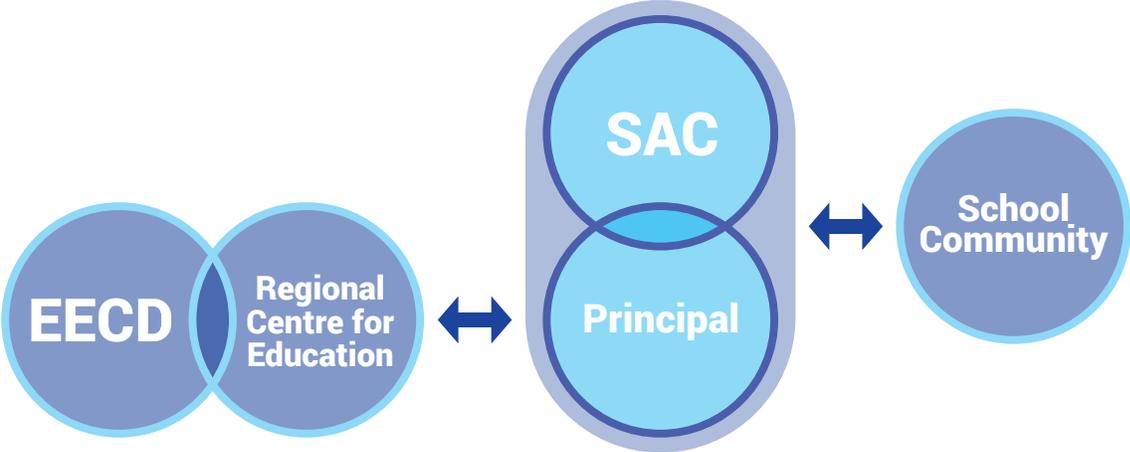
While all SAC meetings are open to the public, principals are the spokespeople for the SACs when communicating with the RCEs, EECD, or the media. Each RCE has a staff person who is responsible for supporting SACs.

SACs can communicate with their school communities in a variety of ways, such as

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

SACs, when appropriate, should coordinate with other groups in the school, for example, with home and school associations, PTOs or PTAs, or local volunteer organizations.

Flow of Information Between SACs and Stakeholders



SPENDING GUIDELINES

This information is intended to assist 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 will each maintain a registry of the SACs for schools within their jurisdiction. The registries will be used by EECD and regional centres for education, 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 regional centre for education 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 (See www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC for a School Advisory Council Annual Report Template). 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 regional centre for education.
- 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 SAC operational expenses. Up to 20 per cent of provincial SAC funding may be used as SAC operational expenses, if necessary, to encourage and support member participation.

A copy of the annual report should be submitted to the RCE before the end of the school year. The report should also be made available to the public.

CONCLUSION

Serving on an SAC 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 SAC members, both new and experienced, by establishing a clear common vision of their roles and responsibilities.

RESOURCES

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2018.
Education Act. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.
www.nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/education.pdf.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2018.
Ministerial Education Act Regulations. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.
www.novascotia.ca/just/regulations/regs/edmin.htm.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2019.
"School Advisory Councils." Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC.

