



Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

June 2017



Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

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Introduction

Education is a responsibility shared by teachers, students, parents/guardians, support staff, communities, school boards, 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 and school board.

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 roles and responsibilities of SACs are set out in sections 20 through 23 of the act. See Appendix J for specific references to SACs in the Education Act.

SACs exist in most Nova Scotia schools. They were 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 school boards with advice that reflects the best interests of students.

One of the duties of SACs is participation in school improvement planning. The provincial Student Success Planning (SSP) program (see Appendix K) 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.
- New 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

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development	Responsible for Nova Scotia's public education system
Deputy Minister	Administers the public education system
School Boards	Accountable to the minister Follow the Education Act and all regulations made pursuant to the act Responsible for all schools in their jurisdiction Responsible for establishing school board policies
Superintendents	Report to the school board Oversee all aspects of their schools and regional office
Principals	Report to the superintendent Responsible to their school communities Provide leadership for all aspects of their schools
School advisory councils	Advise the school principal and school board

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 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 Letter of Agreement. See Appendix A: Sample of Letter of Agreement and By-Laws and Appendix E: Approval Criteria for Letter of Agreement.

The guidelines for selecting SAC members are set out in section 20 of the Education Act.

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 Letter of Agreement provides otherwise, according to section 21(2) of the Education Act.

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 by-laws.

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 Letter of Agreement and by-laws.

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 by-laws.

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

No elected member of a school board may be a member of an SAC in a school which is within that school board's jurisdiction.

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 by

- participating in the ongoing efforts of the school to continuously improve student achievement and school performance
- recommending a school improvement plan to the school board
- contributing to the school's annual report on efforts to improve student achievement and school performance
- advising the school's principal and staff on school policies, curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, fundraising, school communication with parents/guardians, and similar matters to promote a positive learning environment
- reviewing class sizes and rationale for exceeding provincial class cap guidelines when required
- advising the school board on curriculum and student support services, policy development, funding, communication strategies, and similar matters that promote a positive learning environment
- participating in selecting the school's principal
- serving on the School Options Committee (SOC) when a school is identified for review, as described in the School Review Policy referenced in the Education Act
- selecting one or more representatives to serve on the Site Steering Committee if a replacement school is approved for construction
- reviewing and updating the Letter of Agreement (LoA) and SAC by-laws. See Appendix A: Sample Letter of Agreement and By-laws. Letters of Agreement must be approved by the school board and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; SAC by-laws must be approved by the school board.
- promoting communication among SAC partners, school community members, students, and staff

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 school board, 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 by-laws and Letter of 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 by-laws 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 minutes of meetings. The secretary ensures the minutes are available to the public. See Appendix C: Sample Meeting Minutes.

Principal

The principal is an ex officio (automatic) member of the SAC and is expected to attend all meetings. The principal is also encouraged to attend board-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

- preparing the annual report in consultation with the SAC
- collaborating with the chair in communicating the annual report
- supporting the review of the Letter of Agreement and by-laws
- consulting with the SAC on educational issues
- organizing professional development opportunities for the SAC

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 Letter of Agreement, by-laws, and annual reports
- recommend the school improvement plan to the school board

Roles of the Supporting Partners

School boards

School boards provide ongoing support to school advisory councils by:

- developing policies and procedures that support effective SACs
- supporting the ongoing work of SACs
- reviewing and approving the Letters of Agreement and by-laws
- recommending Letters of Agreement for approval to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- consulting with SACs on educational issues, as set out in the act
- organizing leadership development opportunities for SACs
- monitoring and supporting SAC performance
- advising on or resolving conflicts related to SACs
- ensuring that SACs adhere to their Letters of Agreement and by-laws
- receiving the school improvement plan and 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:

- producing this handbook
- providing a provincial model and framework for school improvement
- helping school boards organize SAC leadership development opportunities
- approving the Letters of Agreement

Specific Responsibilities of School Advisory Councils Under the Education Act

Selection of principals

The SAC participates in the selection of its principal by representation on the school board's selection committee (as outlined in Section 22(f) of the Education Act). The hiring decision is ultimately made by the school board.

Student conduct

An SAC or a committee of the SAC may be asked to confirm or revoke student suspensions—normally a responsibility of the school board—if directed to do so by the board.

The school advisory council does not have a role in

- the day-to-day operations of the school
- 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

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

Letter of Agreement (LoA)

The development of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) is the responsibility of the group coming together to form an SAC for the first time. The Letter of Agreement is a document, signed by the SAC, the school board 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 act provides that the LoA 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 board's 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 Letter of Agreement and By-Laws and Appendix E: Approval Criteria for Letters of Agreement.

By-laws

The SAC also develops its own set of by-laws upon its inception. By-laws 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 by-laws, the SAC should indicate the process for their review. If any changes are proposed, again, the school board's regional office staff person responsible for SACs should be contacted early in the process. Changes to the by-laws must be approved by the school board. See Appendix A: Sample School Advisory Council By-laws.

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.

Minutes

Minutes are a written record of a meeting. SAC minutes are compiled by the secretary and should take the form of a brief summary rather than a verbatim transcript. The minutes 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 Minutes.

Quorum

The quorum of the council is usually a simple majority of its members. Some SAC by-laws may also require the presence of at least one representative of a certain group. 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 by-laws. Some decisions, such as approving the minutes 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 school board staff. This may include disputes relating to membership composition, election of members, or adherence to by-laws.

Communication

Communication is very important to effective SAC operations. Communication can take the form of minutes 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 by-laws should provide guidelines for public participation. See Appendix F: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Meetings and Appendix G: Effective School Advisory Councils.

Establishing a School Advisory Council

School advisory councils may 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.

Step 1: Make a request

The following groups and individuals can petition the school board in writing, through the principal, to establish a school advisory council:

- eight or more parents/guardians of students attending a school
- home and school, parent-teacher, or other similar parent/guardian organization for the school
- principal of the school

Step 2: Organize a public information meeting

Once the school board has acknowledged the request for a school advisory council, the principal, in consultation with a group of partners and school board officials, will need to organize and widely advertise a public information meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to facilitate a discussion about school advisory councils and to inform the partners of the rationale, membership guidelines, and roles and responsibilities of a council. It is suggested that a representative ad hoc committee be established to develop a plan for the school advisory council and to set out election procedures. This plan would then form the basis for a school advisory council formation committee.

Step 3: 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 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 4: Election of members

Once the procedures for the establishment of the SAC are agreed upon, the election 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 5: 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 or chairperson
- 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 Procedures for Decision Making.

Step 6: Write the Letter of Agreement

The school advisory council, the school board, 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 22 of the Education Act). The Letter of 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:

- duration of the agreement
- decision-making structure
- structure of the school advisory council
- school advisory council's commitments
- school board's commitments
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitments
- signatories to the agreement (the school advisory council, the principal of the school, the school board, and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)

Step 7: Develop by-laws for the school advisory council

By-laws are rules governing issues such as

- membership structure
- eligibility for membership
- elections
- terms of office
- filling vacancies
- electing an executive

- agenda and minutes
- meetings
- quorum
- appointing committees
- making decisions
- school improvement plan and annual report
- communicating with partners
- budgeting
- resolving conflicts in relation to membership structure, election of members, and adherence to the Letter of Agreement and by-laws
- public participation in SAC meetings
- adopting and amending by-laws

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 related to school advisory councils, and to the roles and responsibilities of students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, superintendents, support staff, and school boards, all of which touch on school advisory councils in some way.
- Appendix K outlines the role of SACs in the school improvement planning process—the provincial model for school improvement planning.

Appendix A: Sample Letter of Agreement and By-Laws

The Letter of 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 Letters of Agreement must comply with current legislation and school board policy.

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council Letter of Agreement

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

Duration 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 ERSB and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 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 by-laws.

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
- collaborating with all school staff to develop a school improvement plan. Copies of this report will be submitted to the school board and will also be communicated to the school community.
- assisting in developing policies which promote academic excellence and a positive, safe learning environment
- developing strategies to improve and support the extracurricular programs and special projects of the school
- maintaining effective communication with parents/guardians by holding regular, open public meetings and making copies of agendas and minutes available upon request
- in the event the principal's position becomes vacant, participating in the selection of the school principal as per the Education Act
- advising the principal and staff on school-level issues such as policy development, programs, curriculum, fundraising, communication, extracurricular activities, and similar matters
- reviewing school class sizes and rationale for exceeding provincial class cap guidelines when required
- advising the school board on programs, student support services, policy development, funding issues, communication strategies, and similar matters
- contributing to or participating in the development of the annual report that describes school improvement activities undertaken during the year

School board commitments

ERSB 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 school board policies and procedures
- meetings between the superintendent or designate and the school advisory council upon request
- copies of school board policies and minutes of school board meetings via the ERSB'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 mediation when there is unresolved conflict between the school advisory council and the school board

Parties to the agreement

We, the undersigned, understand and agree to follow through on the commitments made in this Letter of Agreement.

Hilltop Consolidated School Principal

Date

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council Chair

Date

Eastern Regional School Board Chair

Date

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Date

Sample School Advisory Council By-Laws

School Advisory Council by-laws 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 by-laws, and is not meant to be limiting. All by-laws must comply with legislation and school board policy, and require approval of the school board.

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council By-Laws

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 School Board (ERSB) 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 licensed teacher on staff at Hilltop Consolidated School

Support staff

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

Community members

- must not be employees of the ERSB
- 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/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 ERSB 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 ERSB. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will be organized.

Teachers and support staff

Teachers and support staff will elect 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 through an in-school election 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 for a term of one year.
- Teachers and support staff are 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 by-laws 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 minutes

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 minutes for each school advisory council meeting. Once approved at the subsequent meeting, the minutes will be given to the principal of Hilltop Consolidated School to be included in the school record in either print or electronic format. Minutes 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:

- Regular meetings will be held the last Tuesday of every month, with the possible exception of December and/or June, and as otherwise determined by the Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council. Meetings will be 90 minutes in length unless the SAC agrees by consensus to go longer.
- School advisory council meetings will not be scheduled during July and August.
- 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 by-laws.

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 and annual report for Hilltop Consolidated School will be developed by the principal and staff of the school in partnership with the School Advisory Council. The school improvement plan will be submitted to the ERSB as requested by board staff. The annual report will be presented at the annual SAC meeting in June. This report will be submitted to the ERSB by the end of June.

Adopting and amending by-laws

A notice of motion, given one meeting in advance, is required to amend the by-laws. By-laws will be amended following the established decision-making process. The amended by-laws will be forwarded to the ERSB for approval, and the by-laws 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 minutes
4. School improvement plan update (standing agenda item)
5. Old business (items from previous agenda)
 - a.
 - b.
6. School fees
 - a.
 - b.
7. New business (current items)
 - a. Provincial assessment results
 - b.
8. Special reports and/or presentations
 - a. SchoolsPlus services
 - b.
9. Public input
10. Next meeting date
11. Adjournment

Appendix C: Sample Meeting Minutes

Hilltop Consolidated School Advisory Council MEETING MINUTES

Date, time

Attendance: (names and position held)

Minutes:

1. Call to order: Chair
2. Approval of agenda: (names and position held)
3. Approval of minutes: (names and position held)
4. 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.
5. Old business:
 - a. Seven members of the SAC attended the SAC workshop sponsored by the school board. Sessions included "how to run a meeting" and "sharing ideas."
 - b. The principal updated the SAC on the status of the school board's review of its 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.
 - c. The next School Options Committee (SOC) meeting will be held on November 15.
6. 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.
7. Next meeting date: to be determined
8. Adjournment

Appendix D: Sample Procedures for Decision Making

This is a sample, and is not meant to limit SACs in developing their framework. All operations and by-laws, however, must comply with legislation and school board policy. 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 by-laws may use a different majority structure).
- If there is not a two-thirds majority, no advice will be given (note: individual SAC by-laws 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: Approval Criteria for Letters of Agreement

These are the criteria used by school boards and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to assess proposed Letters of Agreement (LoAs). They are included here as guidance for SACs drafting their first LoA or revising their current LoA. See Appendix A: Sample Letter of Agreement and By-laws.

To be approved by the school board and the department, the LoA must:

- conform to the membership guidelines outlined in “School Advisory Council Membership” in this handbook
- specify the structure of the council
- specify the duration of the LoA
- set out a procedure for decision making
- set out the commitments of the SAC, including a commitment to school improvement planning
- set out the commitments of the school board
- 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 school board and the department
- conform with school board and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development legislation and policies

The board will also verify that the LoA is accompanied by the SAC's written by-laws.

Appendix F: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Meetings

These guidelines are intended to ensure conduct is respectful and equitable, and that everyone's contributions are valued. This is fundamental to most citizens' willingness to volunteer their time. Meetings are open to members of the public, and the by-laws 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.

The following resources may be useful:

Kerr, M. Kaye and Hubert W. King. *Procedures for Meetings and Organizations*, 3rd Edition. Toronto: Carswell, 1996.

Robert, Henry M. III, Daniel H. Honemann, and Thomas J. Balch. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 11th Edition. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2011.

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. Allowing them to speak first ensures their concerns are heard, and helps 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: Guidelines for School Advisory Council Elections

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

- Elections will be conducted as described in the SAC by-laws (by secret ballot or appointment).
- Teacher representatives are to be elected by teachers.
- Support staff representatives are to be elected by support staff.
- Student representatives are to be elected 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 by-laws 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.
- An elected board member cannot serve as an SAC member in a school within the jurisdiction of their school board.
- 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 by-laws.
- As an ex officio member, the principal may not be removed from the SAC.

Appendix I: Frequently Asked Questions

What is a school advisory council?

A school advisory council (SAC) derives its authority from the Education Act. The SAC advises the principal and school staff, and the school board, on policies, curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, student support services, fundraising, parent-school communication, and similar matters, and performs other duties as outlined in sections 20–23 inclusive of the Education Act. See Appendix J for specific provisions of the Education Act 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 21 (1) of the Education Act. 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 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. Members of an elected school board are not eligible to be a member of an SAC for a school within the jurisdiction of their school board.

What is a Letter of Agreement (LoA)?

A Letter of Agreement is a signed document that sets out the member composition and responsibilities of the SAC as agreed upon by the members, the school board, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Letters of Agreement are outlined in section 20 (3b) and 20 (4) of the Education Act.

Who signs the Letter of Agreement and when is it signed?

Once a school advisory council is established and the Letter of Agreement is drafted, it is sent to the board's 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 Letter of Agreement is submitted to the Regional Education Officer (REO) at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for approval. Once the REO's review is complete, the letter is sent to the school board for approval. When all parties are satisfied, the Letter of Agreement is signed by the principal, the chair of the SAC, the chair of the school board or designate, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development or designate.

The LoA may be reviewed, along with the SAC by-laws, annually or at other intervals as the SAC may determine. Any changes require that the Letter of Agreement be re-signed by all parties. The by-laws may be changed without being re-signed by all parties, but the school board 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 school board 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 by-laws 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 by-laws.

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, according to section 23 (1) of the Education Act. These powers rest exclusively with the superintendent of the school board. 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 school board. 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 (SOC), or new school site steering committee. An example of a subcommittee is a School Discipline Committee (a committee which reviews student suspensions).

What is the School Options Committee?

The School Options Committee (SOC) is a multi-stakeholder committee formed to support the school board in conducting a school review. Its work is governed by a mandate given to it by the school board.

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. See Appendix K: Role of School Advisory Councils in the School Improvement Planning Process.

What is the annual report?

The annual report describes the progress that has been made in the implementation of the school improvement plan.

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 minutes 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
- distributing and publicizing the school improvement plan and 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. 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 by-laws reserve a seat on the SAC for a representative of their school's parent-teacher association. Both SACs and parent-teacher associations 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?

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

The school board superintendent is responsible for the efficient operation and administration of the school board office and all schools in the district, and for ensuring that schools comply with provincial laws and policies. The superintendent is accountable to the school board for the educational performance of the students and the schools in the board and shall report to the board 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 superintendent of the board. It is the role of the SAC to advise school principals and school boards 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. In addition, they assist the SAC in the development of a school improvement plan and, upon approval by the school board, coordinate its implementation. Principals also assist the SAC in the preparation of its annual report. 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 school advisory council members?

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 diverse views
- represent the best interests of students
- participate in the writing and review of the Letter of Agreement and by-laws
- consult with the staff of the school to develop and recommend a school improvement plan to the school board
- consult with staff of the school to develop and recommend an annual report to the school board

Appendix J: Extracts from the Education Act Regarding School Advisory Councils

The Education Act sets out the role, duties, and powers of school advisory councils, students, parent/guardians, teachers, principals, superintendents, support staff, and school boards. Relevant sections of the act 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>.

Establishment of Councils

- 20 (1) A school board shall establish a school advisory council for a public school where
- (a) eight or more parent/guardians of students attending the public school;
 - (b) a home and school association, parent/guardian-teacher association or similar organization for the public school; or
 - (c) the principal of the public school, requests, by a petition in writing to the school board, that a school advisory council be established for the school.
- (2) A school board may establish one school advisory council for more than one school where requested by the persons referred to in clause (1)(a) for each school.
- (3) Upon the establishment of a school advisory council for a school pursuant to subsection (1),
- (a) subject to Section 21, the initial composition of the school advisory council shall be determined in the manner prescribed by the Minister; and
 - (b) the school advisory council, the school board and the Minister shall enter into an agreement setting out, subject to this Act, the composition and responsibilities of the school advisory council pursuant to Section 22 and additional advisory duties, if any.
- (4) The school advisory council, the school board and the Minister may, from time to time, amend the agreement made pursuant to subsection (3).
- (5) A school advisory council established pursuant to the former Act is continued in accordance with this Act and, for the purpose of this Act, is deemed to be established pursuant to this Act.

Composition of Council

- 21 (1) A school advisory council for a public school shall have at least five and not more than eighteen members consisting of
- (a) at least one parent/guardian of a child attending the school, elected by the parent/guardians of the children attending the school;
 - (b) where the school is a school with students in grade seven or a higher grade, at least two students attending the school, elected by the students attending the school;
 - (c) where the school is an elementary school, at least two students attending the school if the agreement made pursuant to subsection 20(3) so provides, elected by the students;

- (d) at least one person from the teachers employed at the school, elected by the teachers, and at least one person from the support staff employed at the school, elected by the support staff;
 - (e) the principal of the school; and
 - (f) at least one representative of the community in which the school is situated, appointed by the school advisory council or, where the school advisory council so determines, elected by the community.
- (2) Unless the agreement made pursuant to subsection 20(3) otherwise provides, a school advisory council shall not have more than one third of its members from any of the clauses referred to in subsection (1).
 - (3) A person shall not be a member of a school advisory council and a member of a school board for the school district or school region in which the school is situated.
 - (4) A principal is a non-voting member of a school advisory council unless the agreement otherwise provides.
 - (5) A vacancy on a school advisory council does not impair the authority of the remaining members to act.

Duties of council

- 22 A school advisory council for a public school shall
 - (a) after consultation with the staff of the school, develop and recommend to the school board a school improvement plan;
 - (b) prepare an annual report in such form and containing such information as the Minister determines;
 - (c) advise on the development of school policies that promote academic excellence and a positive learning environment;
 - (d) advise the principal and staff of the school on curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, fund-raising and parent/guardian-school communication and similar matters;
 - (e) advise the school board on curriculum and programs, student-support services, policy development, funding, communication strategies and similar matters;
 - (f) participate in the selection of the principal of the school by representation on the school board's selection committee;
 - (g) subject to the approval of the school board, make by-laws respecting the election of its members, the conduct of its meetings and the operation of the school advisory council; and
 - (h) perform such other duties and have such powers of the school board as the agreement made pursuant to subsection 20(3) provides and the Governor in Council transfers to the school advisory council pursuant to Section 23.

Transfers from school boards to councils

- 23 (1) The Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister and in accordance with an agreement made pursuant to Section 20, may transfer duties and powers of a school board to a school advisory council for a public school and, upon such transfer, the school board ceases to have those powers and duties with respect to that school and those powers and duties are powers and duties of the school advisory council.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the power to hire, suspend, dismiss or discipline an employee of a school board shall not be transferred to a school advisory council.

Students

- 24 (1) It is the duty of a student 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 school board.
- (2) Students are accountable to their teachers for their conduct while under their teachers' supervision.
- (3) Students may participate in decisions that affect their schools through representation on school advisory councils or committees in accordance with school board policy.
- (4) It is the right of students to be informed of their educational progress on a regular basis.

Parent/guardians

- 25 (1) It is the duty of parent/guardians to
- (a) support their children in achieving learning success;
 - (b) cause their children to attend school as required by the regulations;
 - (c) communicate regularly with their children's school;
 - (d) ensure the basic needs of their children are met, including ensuring that their children are well-nourished and well-rested when they go to school; and
 - (e) support their children's teachers in their efforts to provide an education for their children.
- (2) Parent/guardians of students with special needs shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in the development of an individualized program for their children.
- (3) Where
- (a) the parent/guardian of a child with special needs does not agree with the individualized program plan that has been developed for that child; and

- (b) the disagreement cannot be resolved by a school board appeal process, the parent/guardian or the school board may initiate an appeal as prescribed by the regulations.

Teachers

- 26 (1) It is the duty of a teacher in a public school 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 school board;
 - (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 school board 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 or room in the teacher's charge and report to the principal or other person in charge of the school the conduct of any student who is persistently defiant or disobedient;
 - (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 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 parent/guardians in accordance with policies established by the school board;
 - (s) keep such records as are required by the school board or the Minister and permit the inspection of those records by the board, the superintendent or superintendent'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 the school improvement plan;
 - (u) maintain their 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) Teachers are accountable to the school board through the principals of their assigned schools with respect to the performance of their responsibilities. 1995-96, c. 1, s. 26.

Powers of teacher

- 27 A teacher has general oversight and supervision over school premises during school hours and, subject to the authority of the school board and the principal, may exclude from those premises any person who is not a student enrolled in the school and disturbs the learning environment. 1995-96, c. 1, s. 27.

Principals

- 38 (1) The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff.
- (2) It is the duty of a 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 school board, as required by the school board;
 - (c) take all reasonable steps to secure full and regular attendance at school of the students enrolled in the school in accordance with policies established by the school board;
 - (d) communicate regularly with the parent/guardians of the students;
 - (e) ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive and effective learning environment;
 - (f) ensure that provincial and school board policies are followed;
 - (g) identify the staffing needs of the school;
 - (h) assist the school board with the selection of staff for the school;

- (i) evaluate the performance of teachers and other staff of the school;
- (j) assist the school board in the development and implementation of professional-development programs;
- (k) encourage teachers and other staff of the school, students and parent/guardians to participate in school decision-making through representation on school advisory councils and committees;
- (l) participate in the establishment and operation of a school council;
- (m) assist the school advisory council in the development of school improvement plans and, upon approval by the school board, co-ordinate their implementation;
- (n) assist the school advisory council in the preparation of its annual report;
- (o) account to the school board for money received from the school board or any other source;
- (p) account to the school board, through the superintendent, for the performance of the school;
- (q) co-operate with the staff of other departments and agencies of the Government to better meet the needs of the students in the school; and
- (r) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the superintendent.

Superintendents

- 39 (1) A superintendent is accountable to the school board and has overall responsibility for
- (a) the efficient operation of the school board office and the public schools in the school district or school region; and
 - (b) the supervision of all employees of the school board.
- (2) It is the duty of a superintendent to
- (a) administer and evaluate the programs offered by the school board;
 - (b) conduct, or cause to be conducted, an annual performance appraisal of every principal, every vice-principal and all other staff employed by the school board;
 - (c) provide centralized management of services for public schools that are most efficiently provided on a school district-wide or school region-wide basis;
 - (d) oversee the carrying out of the Minister's and the school board's policies and report annually to the school board on the carrying out of those policies;
 - (e) monitor public-school improvement plans, the annual reports of school advisory councils and annually report to the school board on their status;
 - (f) ensure that resources are distributed to public schools in accordance with school board policies and guidelines;

- (g) maintain a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment in all schools in the school district or school region;
 - (h) provide leadership in the school district or school region in promoting quality education, enhanced community involvement and the efficient delivery of services;
 - (i) assist principals in efficient and effective management and decision-making at the school level;
 - (j) work with principals to ensure that students and schools meet the expectations of the school program;
 - (k) co-operate with the Minister and other departments and agencies of the Government to ensure the effective and efficient carrying out of this Act and the regulations;
 - (l) operate and maintain buildings, equipment, supplies and student conveyance under the jurisdiction of the school board;
 - (m) report to the school board as requested by the school board; and
 - (n) perform such other duties as are prescribed by this Act or the regulations or assigned by the school board.
- (3) A superintendent is accountable to the school board for the educational performance of the students and schools in the school district or school region and shall report to the school board annually on such performance.

Support Staff

- 40 (1) It is the duty of a support staff member 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 school board, superintendent, principal, teachers, students and other staff members to maintain an orderly, safe and supportive learning environment;
 - (d) respect the rights of students;
 - (e) participate in staff-development opportunities identified by the person to whom the staff member reports, if requested to do so; and
 - (f) subject to any applicable collective agreement in effect when this Act comes into force, perform such other duties as are assigned by the school board, the superintendent or the principal.
- (2) Every support staff member is accountable to the principal or other person designated by the school board.
- (3) Where a district school board has been established by this Act or the regulations, then, so long as the district school board continues, in the school region in which the district school board is established,

- (a) a reference to the school board and the superintendent in clause (1)(c) shall be read as a reference to the Minister, the regional school board, the district school board and the director of education;
- (b) a reference to the school board, the superintendent or the principal in clause (1)(f) shall be read as a reference to the regional school board; and
- (c) every support staff member, other than a teacher assistant, is accountable to the regional school board and subsection (2) does not apply.

General Responsibilities and Powers of School Boards

- 64 (1) A school board is accountable to the Minister and responsible for the control and management of the public schools within its jurisdiction in accordance with this Act and the regulations.
- (2) A school board shall, in accordance with this Act and the regulations,
- (a) make provision for the education and instruction of all students enrolled in its schools and programs;
 - (b) ensure that its schools adhere to the provincial program of studies;
 - (c) promote excellence in education;
 - (d) develop and implement educational programs for students with special needs within regular instructional settings with their peers in age, in accordance with the regulations and the Minister's policies and guidelines;
 - (e) develop short and long term plans for the provision of barrier-free access to and within educational facilities;
 - (f) promote its schools as safe, quality learning environments and as community resources;
 - (g) subject to the regulations, provide and pay for the conveyance of students to and from school;
 - (h) pay for the boarding of students in accordance with the regulations;
 - (i) pay the tuition of students educated in public schools operated by other boards or authorities in accordance with the regulations;
 - (j) provide regional services to assist public schools;
 - (k) subject to any applicable collective agreement in effect when this Act comes into force, establish and follow a fair-hiring policy;
 - (l) hire and pay the superintendent, principals, teachers and other staff;
 - (m) invite the Department of Education to name a representative to participate in the process of hiring the superintendent and to participate in the annual evaluation of the superintendent;
 - (n) identify staff-development needs;

- (o) establish policies respecting the communication by teachers to students and parent/guardians of learning expectations and progress;
- (p) establish an attendance committee to monitor attendance and carry out school board policies in respect of the absenteeism of students in the schools;
- (q) take remedial steps, in accordance with school board policy, in respect of those students who have been reported to the school board by a principal as being habitually absent from the school without acceptable excuse;
- (r) repealed 2015, c. 16, s. 8.
 - (ra) collect and monitor data on unacceptable behaviour of students, as required by the Minister, including the interventions or consequences resulting from incidents of unacceptable behaviour on the basis of individual incidents and on an aggregate basis;
 - (rb) report to the Minister at such times and in such manner and form as required by the Minister respecting the aggregate data on unacceptable behaviour of students;
 - (rc) for the purpose of fostering an orderly and safe learning environment, co-operate with Government departments and agencies to promote and encourage safe and respectful electronic communications;
- (s) develop policies and implement programs consistent with the Minister's policies and guidelines respecting students who have been suspended for more than five days or expelled from school;
- (t) establish a policy for the protection of students and employees from harassment and abuse;
- (u) develop other regional policies, consistent with any policies established by the Minister, that reflect the board's responsibilities, including policies with respect to staffing, student-support services, programs, school-based fund-raising and transportation;
- (v) develop regional strategic and business plans;
- (w) enter into an agreement, with a school advisory council and the Minister, determining the composition and responsibilities of the school advisory council;
- (x) encourage the development of school advisory councils within its school district or school region;
- (y) provide leadership training for members of school advisory councils;
- (z) approve school-improvement plans and the annual report submitted by the school advisory council;
 - (aa) consult with school advisory councils with respect to matters assigned to school advisory councils pursuant to this Act;
 - (ab) provide for the effective and efficient management of the financial affairs of the board;
 - (ac) supervise capital expenditures;

- (ad) provide and pay for adequate equipment and furnishings for public schools and the maintenance and operation of equipment, furnishings and school buildings;
 - (ae) manage, maintain, repair and keep safe all real and personal property owned, leased or used by the board;
 - (af) insure, in amounts agreed upon by the Minister, all buildings and personal property owned by the school board;
 - (ag) pay its own administration costs including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the provision of office space, supplies and equipment, payments to auditors and board members, and the enforcement of this Act;
 - (ah) provide the sums required to pay the cost of arbitration boards appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Teachers' Collective Bargaining Act and to implement the awards of such boards;
 - (ai) designate persons to execute agreements on behalf of the school board;
 - (aj) establish a public tendering and procurement policy, consistent with the Atlantic Provinces Procurement Agreement or similar or successor agreement;
 - (ak) with the approval of the Minister, enter into agreements with municipalities for the purpose of carrying out this Act and the regulations;
 - (al) co-operate with other school boards and Government departments and agencies to ensure the effective and efficient carrying out of this Act and the regulations;
 - (ala) establish a school board conflict of interest policy for school board staff consistent with the Provincial conflict of interest policy for school board staff established by the Minister in the regulations;
 - (alb) adopt a code of ethics in accordance with the regulations;
 - (am) submit to the Minister an annual report containing such information as is required by the Minister; and
 - (an) perform such other duties requested by or delegated to it by the Minister or required to carry out its responsibilities under this Act.
- (3) A school board may
- (a) provide such courses as are approved by the Minister;
 - (b) provide such additional services and benefits as the school board may consider desirable;
 - (c) enter into agreements, including tuition agreements, for the provision of services and benefits;
 - (d) permit persons to offer religious studies in its schools in accordance with the policies of the school board.
- (6) A school board, in carrying out its responsibilities under this Act, shall meet education program, service and performance standards established by the Minister.

Appendix K: Role of School Advisory Councils in the School Improvement Planning Process

Student Success Planning

Student Success Planning is the name of the Nova Scotia approach to school improvement planning.

The school advisory council, under the leadership of the principal, is responsible for developing the school's improvement plan. The principal will lead and be accountable for the implementation of this plan. However, everyone has a part to play, including teachers, support staff, parents/guardians, students, and community members.

The SAC participates in monitoring the implementation of the school's improvement plan. The SAC should be kept informed at each stage of the plan, from development to implementation. The status of the plan should be a standing agenda item at SAC meetings.

Annual Report

The annual report describes progress in the implementation of the school improvement plan. The report is prepared by the school principal, shared with the school advisory council, and submitted to the school board through the board regional office staff member responsible for school improvement planning.