

# School Advisory Councils (SAC): Roles, Responsibilities and Membership

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**HALIFAX CONVENTION CENTRE**

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# Overview

1. Legislation
2. Duties and Responsibilities
3. SAC Agreement & Bylaws
4. Membership
5. SAC Funds
6. Communication

# Legislation - Act

## Establishment and composition

21. (1) A school advisory council may be established in accordance with the regulations for a public school or a group of schools.
- (2) A regional school advisory council may be established in accordance with the regulations to represent two or more groups of schools within a school region or across school regions.
- (3) The composition and powers and duties of a school advisory council or regional school advisory council, and the terms and conditions upon which its members serve, are as prescribed by the regulations.

## Duties

22. A school advisory council or regional school advisory council shall
  - (a) assist a regional centre to ensure that the regional centre's public schools and related services are meeting the needs of the communities and regions they serve; and
  - (b) perform such other functions as are prescribed by the regulations and as assigned by the Minister or the regional centre.

# Legislation – Ministerial Regulations

## Items covered in regulations:

- ▶ Establishing school advisory council
- ▶ School advisory council agreements
- ▶ Composition of school advisory council
- ▶ Newly established school advisory council
- ▶ Vacancy on school advisory council
- ▶ Duties of school advisory council



# SAC Handbook

## Topics covered:

- ▶ Governance Structure of Education
- ▶ Duties and Responsibilities
- ▶ Establishing a Council
- ▶ Membership
- ▶ Meeting Guidelines
- ▶ Spending Guidelines



## NOVA SCOTIA School Advisory Council Handbook



Additional support materials available at: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC>

# SAC Agreements and Bylaws

## Agreements

- ▶ Tripartite signed document that includes the SAC Chair, RED and EECD that set out the member composition of an SAC and the responsibilities of its partners.
- ▶ To be approved 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; and
  - ▶ the SAC's, RCE's, and EECD's commitments.

## Bylaws

- ▶ Bipartite signed document by the SAC Chair and RED.
- ▶ This includes written rules, definitions, and procedures that guide the election of members, the conduct of meetings, and the operations of the council. Approved by the SAC and the RED. RCEs are responsible for ensuring alignment with the Agreement.
- ▶ Bylaws provide guidance on items such as:
  - ▶ electing and appointing members
  - ▶ setting terms of office for members
  - ▶ filling membership vacancies
  - ▶ defining quorum
  - ▶ making decisions

# School Advisory Council Agreement

The school advisory council agreement will contain the following items:

- 1) effective date and review of the agreement
- 2) structure of the SAC
- 3) decision-making structure (including quorum)
- 4) SAC's commitments
- 5) Regional Centre for Education's commitments
- 6) Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's commitments
- 7) signatories to the agreement (the SAC Chair, the Regional Executive Director of Education, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development / designate)

# Bylaws: Required Components

Bylaws are rules governing issues such as:

- 1) membership structure
- 2) eligibility for membership;
- 3) elections / appointments;
- 4) terms of service;
- 5) filling vacancies;
- 6) electing an executive;
- 7) agenda and meeting summaries;
- 8) meetings;
- 9) public participation in SAC meetings;
- 10) quorum;
- 11) making decisions;
- 12) School Improvement Plan and annual report;
- 13) adopting and amending bylaws; and
- 14) signatories to the agreement (the SAC Chair and the Regional Executive Director of Education).

# Duties and Responsibilities of the SAC

## The SAC has a role in:

- ▶ advising principals, RCE, and, as needed, EECD
- ▶ entering into an SAC Agreement and making bylaws
- ▶ participating in efforts to improve student achievement and well-being
- ▶ participating in provincial and regional meetings, consultations, and professional development opportunities
- ▶ determining spending priorities for the funds allocated
- ▶ engage in Innovation Grant opportunities

## The SAC does **not** have a role in:

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



A concern about alleged discipline problems that a classroom teacher is having is brought up at an SAC meeting – How should this be addressed?

# Roles of SAC Members

## Principal

- ▶ Provides support for the effective functioning of the SAC.
- ▶ Ensures the school improvement plan is a standing item on the meeting agenda.
- ▶ Supports the preparation of the annual report and ensures that it contains required information.
- ▶ Collaborates with the chair when communicating about the annual report.
- ▶ Supports the review of the SAC Agreement and bylaws.
- ▶ Consults with SACs on educational issues.
- ▶ Supports professional development opportunities organized for SACs by the Minister, RCEs, or other education partners.
- ▶ Communicates with the RCE and EECD on behalf of the SAC.

## All SAC Members

- ▶ Provide advice to the principal on school programs and policies.
- ▶ 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 by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan.
- ▶ Ensure the SAC Agreement and bylaws are followed.

# Responsibility of Regional Executive Directors

## REDs provide ongoing support to SACs by:

- ▶ assigning regional office staff to ensure SACs are well supported
- ▶ 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

# Responsibility of 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

# Membership

## 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
- ▶ the parent/guardian group can make up more than one-third of the SAC membership and may not exceed 50%
- ▶ It is advantageous to have more than one member per each SAC group. This is in order to meet quorum requirements of having at least one representative from each of the SAC membership groups to hold a meeting.
- ▶ principal (or designate) is a non-voting members

The vice-principal is the principal's designate on the SAC. The vice-principal sits at the SAC table as a participating non-voting member even when the principal is there. Is this permitted as per the Agreement/Bylaws?

# Membership - Variance

## Ministerial Education Act Regulations - Section 71

- (5)** Except as provided in subsection (8), a school advisory council may vary its membership composition during a school academic year to increase the diversity of membership of the school advisory council and to allow for representatives from traditionally under-represented members of the school community.
- (6)** A school advisory council must provide notice to the regional centre of its intent to vary its membership composition under subsection (5).
- (7)** A school advisory council may maintain a variance under subsection (5) until the composition provisions of the school advisory council agreement are amended.
- (8)** Subsection (5) does not apply to a newly established school advisory council whose composition has been determined in the manner prescribed by the regional centre as described in Section 73.



A rural school has an SAC with an established membership (4 Parents, 3 Staff, 2 Students & 3 Community Members) with no designated seats. Recently a number of newcomer families joined the school community and a parent of one of the new families would like to become involved with the SAC.

How can this request be facilitated?

# Increasing Diversity in SAC Membership

- ▶ 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
  - ▶ Newcomers

## Example

The Advisory Council shall include the following members:

- ▶ The principal, who is a non-voting member
- ▶ Four parents/guardians (with designated seats for both an African Nova Scotian and an Indigenous parent/guardian)
- ▶ Three teachers and one member of the school support staff
- ▶ Three students (two from grades 10-12 and one from grades 7-9)
- ▶ Three community members



Your school is located next to an historical ANS community and your SAC agreement has a designated seat that is unfilled. What suggestions do you have to recruit a member from that community?

# Meeting Guidelines

- ▶ All SAC meetings are open to the public (no in-camera/private meetings)
- ▶ The chair organizes the agenda in collaboration with the principal and provides council members with a copy of the agenda in advance of the meeting
- ▶ The chair ensures all members, including students, have opportunities to speak
- ▶ SAC meeting summaries are compiled by the secretary
- ▶ The meeting schedule, agendas, and summaries must be made available to the public
- ▶ Quorum
- ▶ Decision-making
- ▶ Conflict resolution





There has been a serious altercation between two groups of students at the school. The police are involved. The SAC wants to schedule an in-camera(private) meeting to discuss the situation.

# Meeting Guidelines (continued)

## 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.

# Meeting Guidelines (continued)

## At the meeting

- ▶ The chair calls the meeting to order.
- ▶ The chair recognizes members before they speak.
- ▶ All members should be provided a fair opportunity to express their opinions on the agenda items.
- ▶ Each member should be permitted to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.
- ▶ 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 chair ensures all members, including students, have opportunities to speak.

# Meeting Guidelines (continued)

## At the end of a meeting

- ▶ Confirm action items: who, what, when
- ▶ Confirm date and place of the next meeting
- ▶ Adjourn the meeting

# Meeting Guidelines (continued)

## 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.
- ▶ Once approved, the summaries should be posted in a place accessible to all members of the school community, such as the school website.
- ▶ 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.

# Meeting Guidelines (continued)

## 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 agreements and bylaws.
- ▶ Some decisions, such as approving the agenda and 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.

# SAC Meetings and Public Participation

- ▶ All meetings are open to members of the public. The SAC's bylaws should provide guidelines for public participation.
  - ▶ **E.G.** All meetings are open to the public. Members of the public who wish to address the SAC are asked to inform the SAC through the chair or the school principal in writing at least one week prior to the SAC meeting. They may address the meeting at the discretion of the chair.
  - ▶ Bylaws provide opportunity for public input on agenda items only at the end of each meeting.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ It is not within the mandate of SACs to discuss specific incidents involving individual students or staff.
- ▶ Bylaws provide opportunity for public input on agenda items at the end of each meeting.



In what ways might the physical configuration/setup of a meeting space effect a School Advisory Council meeting?

# SAC Funds

A funding allocation of \$5,000, plus \$1 per student is provided to each school's SAC to support the SAC mandate and student achievement and well being.

## Spending Guidelines

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ All expenditures must fit into at least one (1) of these spending categories :
    - 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



Your SAC has several parents/guardians who experience difficulty in finding childcare to attend the monthly meeting.

How can the SAC support these members to attend the meetings?

# Annual Reports

- ▶ Any funds used by SACs must be accounted for and reported on
- ▶ A copy of the annual report should be submitted to the RCE before the end of the school year.
- ▶ The report should be made available to the public.

## The annual report should include the following information:

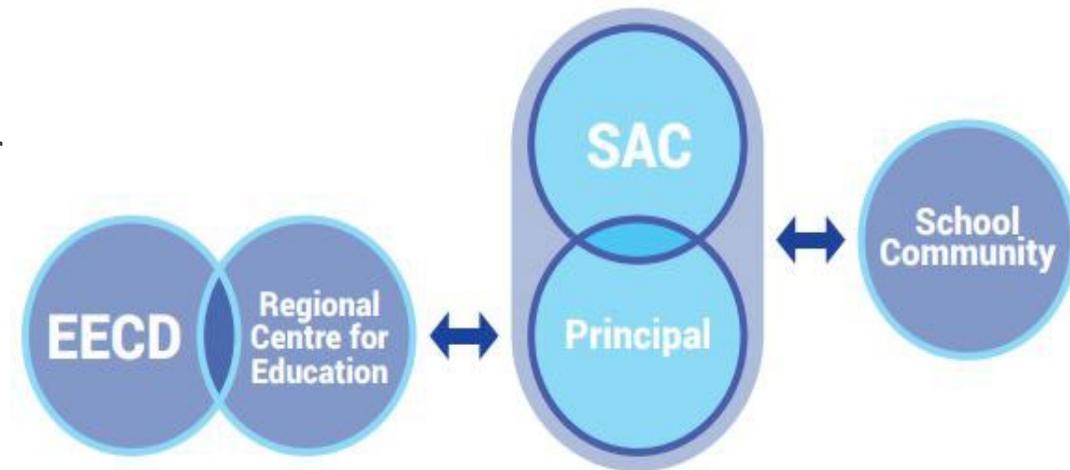
- ▶ a list of SAC members including names, membership type (i.e., parent, community member, staff), and role (i.e., Chair, Vice Chair)
- ▶ a summary of work undertaken by the SAC to improve student achievement and school performance
- ▶ any significant milestones and success stories that the SAC would like to highlight
- ▶ any related sub-committee work undertaken by SAC members (e.g., School Steering Team)
- ▶ a statement of revenues and expenditures, including reporting on spending from each spending category

# Communication

SACs communicate with their school communities to enhance local voice. This can be done in a variety of ways which may include but is not limited to:

- ▶ 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 SAC activities on the school sign
- ▶ publicizing the annual report
- ▶ hosting school and community engagement sessions
- ▶ hearing from local community members

**Principals are the spokespeople for the SAC when communicating with the RCE, EECD, or the media**



# Conflict Resolution

Usually, SACs are well functioning collaborative organization that are working to fulfill their mandate.

Occasionally conflict may arise within an SAC.

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



# Questions / Comments

<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC>