

# Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook



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Nova Scotia School Advisory Council Handbook

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is a responsibility shared among teachers, students, parents, support staff, communities, school boards and the Province of Nova Scotia, all of whom have success for every student as their priority. The School Advisory Council (SAC) is 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 improved student achievement and improved school performance. A high level of success in our education system can best be achieved through teamwork in which partners have meaningful involvement in decision making.

School Advisory Councils are volunteer organizations that were established by the Nova Scotia *Education Act*. The duties of School Advisory Councils are embedded in the Act and as a legislated body, receive their authority under the Act. The specific roles and responsibilities of School Advisory Councils are set out in the *Education Act*, Sections 20 through 23 inclusive. (See Appendix K for specific references to the *Education Act* related to SACs).

School Advisory Councils exist in most schools within the province of Nova Scotia. They were established to provide parents, staff, community members, and where appropriate, students, with a voice that will influence school decisions that impact on student learning. School Advisory Councils bring partners together to provide advice to principals and to school boards, in the best interests of students.

The *Education Act* identifies involvement in school improvement planning as a duty of a School Advisory Council. The provincial Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program (NSSAP) provides a role for the School Advisory Council in the ongoing efforts of the school to improve student achievement and school performance.

The purpose of this handbook is to support School Advisory Council members, both new and experienced. It describes School Advisory Councils, clarifies their roles and responsibilities, and provides information, guidelines and samples of School Advisory Council processes.

School Advisory Councils require ongoing support in the form of training and information resources so all members can knowledgeably perform their roles. This handbook helps to address this need, and to establish a clearer common vision of the role and responsibilities of School Advisory Councils.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

School Advisory Councils are guided by the following principles:

- Education is a shared responsibility
- Students must be the first consideration for all decisions
- People at the local school level have important perspectives to advise on and contribute to decisions that will meet the needs of all students
- Increasing the quality of education means the continuous improvement of schools
- Change must take into account the unique characteristics of each community
- Partners need to use teamwork skills and strategies to manage change effectively
- Involving the community in improving the school will enhance the learning for all students

# ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION IN NOVA SCOTIA

<b>Minister of Education</b>	Responsible for Nova Scotia’s public education system
<b>Deputy Minister</b>	Administers the public education system
<b>School Boards</b>	Accountable to the Minister Follow the <i>Education Act</i> and all <i>Regulations</i> made pursuant to that Act Responsible for all schools in their jurisdiction Responsible to determine school board policies
<b>Superintendents</b>	Report to the school board Oversee all aspects of their schools and regional office
<b>Principals</b>	Report to the superintendent Responsible to their school communities Provide leadership for all aspects of their schools
<b>School Advisory Councils</b>	Advise the school principal and school board

## SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

School Advisory Councils (SACs) vary in size from a minimum of five to a maximum of eighteen representatives. Members are elected by their representative groups: teachers elect teachers, support staff elects support staff, parents/guardians elect parents/guardians, and students elect students. Community members are appointed or may be elected, as determined by each school's Letter of Agreement. (See Appendix A for a sample Letter of Agreement, and Appendix F "Approval Criteria for Letter of Agreement").

The guidelines are set out in Section 20 of the *Education Act*.

The membership of a School Advisory Council might look like:

### **Elementary School Advisory Council with 6 members**

- Principal
- 2 Parents/Guardians
- 2 School Staff (1Teacher and 1 Support Staff)
- 1 Community Representative

### **Junior/Senior High School Advisory Council with 10 members**

- Principal
- 3 Parents/Guardians
- 3 School Staff (2 Teachers and 1 Support Staff)
- 1 Community Representative
- 2 Students

None of these groups can make up more than 1/3 of the SAC unless the Letter of Agreement otherwise provides, according to Section 21(2) of the *Education Act*.

When a Home and School Association or parent teacher group also exists in the school, SACs may designate a seat for a member from this group through its Letter of Agreement.

Efforts should also be made to include individuals who reflect the diversity of the community and represent the communities served by the school. This includes but is not limited to African Nova Scotians, First Nations, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities.

The school principal is an ex-officio (nonvoting) member, therefore cannot serve in the role of the chair. When the principal is unable to attend, the vice principal may be required to serve in that role.

A vacancy does not impair the authority of the remaining members; however, vacancies should be filled in a timely manner.

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 a SAC in a school which is within that school board's jurisdiction.

It is expected that school staff will not serve on a SAC in the role of parent/guardian, or community member.

## EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

School Advisory Councils become meaningfully involved 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 the school's efforts to improve in student achievement and school performance
- Advising the school's principal and staff on school policies, curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, fund-raising, parent-school communication and similar matters to promote a positive learning environment
- Advising the school board on curriculum and student-support services, policy development, funding, communication strategies and similar matters that promote learning in a positive environment
- Participating in selecting the school's principal according to the *Education Act*, Section 22(f)
- Serving as a Study Committee, when a school is identified for review (for possible closure) by a school board, as stated in Section 18 of the *Ministerial Regulations*
- Reviewing and updating the Letter of Agreement (LoA) and SAC by-laws. (See Appendix B for sample by-laws). These are subject to school board and (for Letters of Agreement) Department of Education approval
- Promoting communication among SAC partners, community, students and staff

## ROLE OF SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS IN THE NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

School improvement planning begins with the collection and analysis of data associated with student achievement and the quality of the school’s learning environment. Each school establishes a team led by the principal and teacher co-chairs. The team, known as the internal review team, includes members of the School Advisory Council. The internal review team examines student achievement and school performance data and prepares the internal review report. This report provides the basis for data-informed decisions about what the school needs to do to make improvements.

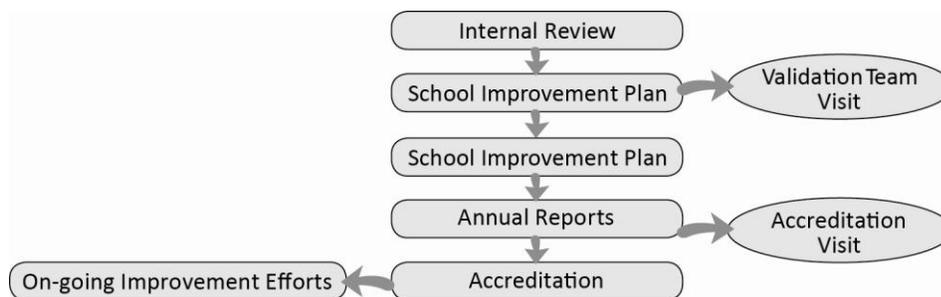
The internal review team develops a school improvement plan with goals for improved student achievement and school performance. Schools receive support for this work through the person designated by the school board as the accreditation co-ordinator. The plan must have the support of staff and the School Advisory Council. The internal review team, under the leadership of the co-chairs and principal, communicates with partner groups, and ensures continued participation in the development of the plan.

When the plan is completed, educators external to the school comprising a validation team visit the school to provide feedback and advice on the work done by the school in its internal review and school improvement plan. Representatives of the School Advisory Council are expected to meet with the validation team when it visits the school.

Schools then begin implementing their plan. Long term, meaningful, sustainable change takes time. The Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program (NSSAP) anticipates three school years to implement the goals, although some schools may need more or less time. During this time, schools implement the plan, collect and analyze data to monitor progress, and report annually on their progress.

The final step in the Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program cycle is the onsite accreditation visit by the Department of Education, in which the SAC chair is expected to participate. Accreditation is achieved when a school presents convincing evidence (data) indicating growth in relation to the goals identified in its school improvement plan; it is about demonstrating improvement.

### Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program Overview



### **School Advisory Council Annual Report**

The SAC annual report describes the progress in the implementation of the school improvement plan, and outlines the actions to be undertaken in the next school year. The report is prepared by the school principal, approved by the School Advisory Council, and submitted to the school board through the accreditation coordinator.

The annual report includes the following:

- Description of the school improvement work undertaken during the year
- Presentation of data collected and analyzed to provide evidence of progress
- Actions to be undertaken in the next school year

The annual report is considered to be a public document and, accordingly, should be placed on the school's website.

## DEFINED ROLES OF SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS MEMBERS

The *Education Act* outlines the role of School Advisory Councils (SACs). In addition, there are designated leadership and support roles which contribute to the effective operation of SACs. The following descriptions give an overview of these roles:

### **Chairperson (Chair)**

The chair represents the SAC, ensuring open lines of communication within the SAC, and with the school board, school, parents 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 SACs, the SAC's by-laws and Letter of Agreement, the conduct of effective meetings, and the development of a well-functioning SAC.

The chair calls to order, facilitates, and coordinates each meeting. (See Appendix G "Guidelines for SAC meetings" and Appendix H "Hints and Tips for Better SAC Meetings"). This will ensure the agenda is followed, the schedule is respected and the discussion encourages all members to have opportunities to contribute their own perspectives, interests and concerns. The chair helps to seek consensus and resolve conflicts of the SAC. The chair assists the principal in communicating to partner groups regarding the annual report.

### **Secretary**

The secretary is responsible to record and distribute the minutes of meetings. The secretary ensures the minutes are available to the public. (See Appendix D for sample meeting minutes).

### **Principal**

Principals are expected to attend all SAC meetings. They are 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 is a non-voting, ex-officio member.

Other roles of the principal in supporting the SAC include:

- Providing support for the effective functioning of the SAC
- Ensuring the school improvement plan is a regular meeting agenda item
- Preparing the annual report
- 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

## **Members**

Staff, parent, student and community members:

- Provide advice to the principal on school programs and policies
- Communicate with the groups they represent in order to articulate diverse views
- Work as a team to 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

## **Vice Chair**

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

## **ROLES OF THE SUPPORTING PARTNERS**

### **School Board**

The school board provides a key role in the ongoing support of its School Advisory Councils, including:

- Developing school board policies and procedures that support effective SACs
- Supporting the ongoing work of School Advisory Councils
- Reviewing and approving the Letters of Agreement and by-laws
- Consulting with SACs on educational issues, as set out in the Act
- Organizing leadership development opportunities for SACs
- Monitoring and supporting School Advisory Council performance
- Advising on or resolving conflicts within SACs in regard to membership on SACs, election of SAC members, and adherence to the terms of the SAC's Letter of Agreement and its by-laws
- Approving school improvement plans and school annual reports
- Requesting advice from SACs on policy or other matters, in accordance with the Act

### **Nova Scotia Department of Education**

The Department of Education supports School Advisory Councils by:

- Providing a School Advisory Council Handbook
- Providing a provincial model and framework for school improvement, the Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program
- Providing guidance, structure and monitoring of annual reports
- Accrediting schools that demonstrate improvement in relation to their goals
- Assisting school boards to organize SAC leadership development opportunities
- Approving the Letters of Agreement and by-laws
- Maintaining an on line data base for schools to record school improvement plans

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS UNDER THE *EDUCATION ACT***

### **Principal Selection**

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

### **Student Conduct**

Pursuant to Section 125 (b) of the *Education Act*, a school board has the authority to direct the SAC or a committee of the SAC to perform the duties of a school board to confirm, or revoke, student suspensions.

### **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 K for specific provisions of the *Education Act* relating to School Advisory Councils).

### **Letter of Agreement (LoA)**

A Letter of Agreement (LoA) is a signed document that sets out the member composition and responsibilities of the SAC, school board and the Department of Education. This 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 any changes are proposed, the person designated as the school board SAC coordinator should be contacted early in the process. In order to change the Letter of Agreement, all partners must approve the changes. (See Appendix A for a sample Letter of Agreement and Appendix F "Approval Criteria for Letter of Agreement").

### **By-laws**

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. It is recommended to review the by-laws at each annual meeting. If any changes are proposed, again, the school board's SAC coordinator should be contacted early in the process. Changes to the by-laws must be approved by the school board. (See Appendix B for sample by-laws).

## **SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

### **Times**

The time and date of all meetings, including the annual general meeting, should be decided for the year 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 C for a sample meeting agenda).

### **Minutes**

Minutes record the proceedings of a meeting. This duty is performed by the secretary. They are 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 the partners represented, such as a school website. (See Appendix D for sample meeting minutes).

### **Quorum**

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

### **Decision Making**

Consensus is the preferred decision making procedure for the SAC, as an advisory body. SACs need to determine a process for making decisions and define that process in their by-laws. Some decisions may be taken by a simple vote, such as approving the minutes of a meeting. Other decisions may lend themselves more appropriately to consensus.

### **Conflict Resolution**

SAC by-laws should address membership provisions and processes for election of members. (See Appendix I "Guidelines for School Advisory Council Elections"). Disputes within an SAC relating to membership, election of members, or adherence to its by-laws, which cannot be resolved internally, may be referred to school board staff.

### **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 through the local media. Regularly scheduled meetings should be open to the public and the by-laws should provide guidelines for their participation. (See Appendix G "Guidelines for School Advisory Council Meetings" and Appendix H "Hints and Tips for Better School Advisory Council Meetings").

## 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 include:

### **Step 1: Make a Request**

The following groups can petition the school board in writing, through the principal, to establish a School Advisory Council:

- (a) Eight or more parents of students attending a school
- (b) Home and school, parent-teacher or other similar parent organization for the school
- (c) Principal of the school

### **Step 2: Organize a Public Information Meeting**

When 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 for a School Advisory Council, membership guidelines, and roles and responsibilities. It is suggested that a representative ad hoc committee be established to develop a plan for the School Advisory Council and 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, 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:

- Purpose of the meeting
- Procedure for the election of parent, staff and student (if applicable) representatives
- Discussion about community representation
- Discussion of communication strategies

### **Step 4: 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 will describe how decisions will be made, what decisions will be under the authority of the SAC, and who will be involved in the decision-making and consultation processes. It will clearly spell out the procedures for the SAC. The SAC will agree on

when decisions will be made in a consensus, consultative, or voting manner. The preferred model for important decisions is consensus. (See Appendix E “Sample Decision Making Procedures”).

### **Step 5: Write the Letter of Agreement**

The School Advisory Council, the school board and the Minister of Education 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 (School Advisory Council, school board, and the Department of Education) will make to support student learning. The letter will be signed by all partners and will include:

- The duration of the Agreement
- Decision-making structure
- The structure of the School Advisory Council
- The School Advisory Council's commitments
- The school board's commitments
- The Department of Education's commitments

### **Step 6: Develop By-laws for the School Advisory Council**

The School Advisory Council's by-laws describe operational procedures which may include but not be limited to:

- Running meetings
- Electing members
- Filling vacancies
- Appointing committees
- Electing an executive
- Making decisions
- Communicating with partners
- Budgeting
- Resolving conflicts in relation to membership, election of members, and in relation to adherence to the Letter of Agreement and by-laws
- Reporting to partners
- Public participation in SAC meetings

## CONCLUSION

Membership on a School Advisory Council is an opportunity to serve a school, have a voice in decisions made in schools, and share an interest in the school. This handbook is intended to support School Advisory Council members, both new and experienced, by clarifying roles and responsibilities, and establishing a clearer common vision of the roles and responsibilities of School Advisory Councils.

What follows are several appendices that provide additional information, guidelines and samples of School Advisory Council processes:

- Appendixes A through E are samples to illustrate what some documents that SACs encounter might look like.
- Appendixes F through I offer guidelines and tips to assist SACs in their work.
- Appendix J contains frequently asked questions that may be a useful reference for new SAC members in particular.
- Appendix K contains extracted references from the *Education Act* related to School Advisory Councils, and the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, support staff and school boards, all of which touch on School Advisory Councils in some way.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE LETTER OF AGREEMENT

The School Advisory Council Letter of Agreement is intended to guide the structure and operations of the SAC. This sample is intended to serve as a beginning point in helping SACs develop their Letter of Agreement, and is not meant to limit SACs development of their framework. All Letters of Agreement must comply with current legislation and school board policy.

### Content of Sample Letter

The purpose of this letter is to establish the terms and conditions of the agreement between the Eastern Regional School Board, Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council, and the Department of Education to operate a School Advisory Council at the school level.

The parties agree to the following:

#### Duration of the Agreement

The agreement begins (September 1, or other appropriate date). The agreement will be reviewed annually by SAC members before (June 1 or other appropriate date) of each year. Any mutually agreed-upon revisions can be made at that time, and submitted to the school board and the Department of Education, to become effective upon approval of all partners.

#### Structure of the Council

The membership of the School Advisory Council includes:

- The principal
- Two students (one from grades 7-9, one from grades 10-12)
- Three parents
- Three school staff (two teachers, one support staff)
- Two community members

Council members will serve for the duration of:

MEMBER	NAME	TERM END DATE
Principal	Anna McInnis	Ex officio
Parent	Bob Smith	Sept 30, 2011
Parent	Cari Starfield	Sept 30, 2012
Parent	Dan MacDonald	Sept 30, 2013
Student	Sheldon Francis	Sept 30, 2011
Student	Greg Letang	Sept 30, 2012
Teacher	Yvon Samson	Sept 30, 2012
Teacher	James Walters	Sept 30, 2013
Support Staff	Lori Dorrington	Sept 30, 2011
Community	Marvin MacKenzie	Sept 30, 2011

### **Decision-Making Process**

Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council will make decisions in the following ways:

- All decisions will be made by consensus
- If a consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be delayed until the next meeting. During this time, there will be consultation and discussion with the appropriate partners and information brought back to the next meeting
- If consensus still is not reached, then a vote will be taken with two-thirds majority being required for acceptance. If there is not a two-thirds majority, then no advice is given to the principal or school board
- Only decisions that have support of the School Advisory Council will go forward to the school principal
- Information on important pending decisions will be distributed one week prior to the next regular meeting
- The principal, as a non-voting member, participates in the decision making of the School Advisory Council in a consultative role

### **Meeting Schedule**

Meetings will be scheduled monthly during the school year, on the third Thursday of the month, with the exception of December and June, beginning at 7:00 pm.

Meetings will be a maximum of two hours and may be extended for 30 minutes with the consensus of the School Advisory Council.

### **School Advisory Council Commitments**

Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council will be responsible for:

- Providing all partners with a voice in decision making
- Collaborating with all school staff in developing a school improvement plan and/or participating in the school accreditation process
- Assisting in developing school policies which promote academic excellence and a positive learning environment
- Developing ways and strategies to improve and support the extra-curricular programs and special projects in the school
- Advising the principal and staff on curriculum and programs, school practices, student discipline, fund-raising, parent-school communication, and similar matters
- Advising the school board on curriculum, programs, student-support services, policy development, funding, communication strategies, and similar matters
- Contributing to the annual report that describes school improvement activities undertaken during the year, specific results that have been achieved, and factors that influenced the results
- Maintaining effective communication among the partners by holding regular, open public meetings and circulating written information

- Participating in the selection of the school’s principal in accordance with the *Education Act* and school board guidelines
- Developing by-laws to guide the structure and operations of the School Advisory Council, and appending them to the Letter of Agreement

**School Board Commitments**

Eastern Regional School Board will make a commitment to support the Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council by providing:

- Consultation with the School Advisory Council on matters assigned to them in accordance with the *Education Act*
- A facilitator to assist the School Advisory Council as required
- Feedback to the School Advisory Council on its by-laws and annual reports, and approving by-laws and annual reports
- Leadership development workshops and/or conferences

**Department of Education Commitments**

The Department of Education will support the Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council by:

- Developing educational materials to assist School Advisory Councils in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities
- Providing a model and framework for school improvement planning (the Nova Scotia School Accreditation Program)
- Providing information on new curriculum and policy initiatives

**Parties to the Agreement**

We clearly understand and agree to follow through on the commitments made in this letter of agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Principal

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Eastern Regional School Board

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Department of Education

## **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS**

School Advisory Council by-laws are intended to guide the structure and operations of the SAC. The following sample is intended to serve as a beginning point in helping councils develop their individual by-laws, and is not meant to limit SACs development of their framework. All by-laws must comply with legislation and school board policy, and require approval of the school board.

### **Membership**

The Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council will have 10 members including: 3 parents/guardians of the children enrolled in the school; 2 students; 3 teachers and support staff; and 2 community members. Not more than 1/3 of the membership may be drawn from any of the above groups. Efforts will be made to include individuals who reflect the diversity of the school community, including but not limited to African Nova Scotians, First Nations, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities.

The school principal will serve as a permanent non-voting member, and cannot serve as SAC chair.

### **Length of Term**

The term for any position will be no longer than three years. In order to facilitate continuity, terms for elected or appointed members will be staggered so that approximately 50% of the representatives are retained from one year to the next.

### **Elections**

Parent/guardian representatives will be elected at a public meeting. Community representatives will be appointed by the SAC or elected at a public meeting. Teachers and support staff will elect their representatives. Students will elect students. (See Appendix I "Guidelines for School Advisory Council Elections").

### **Vacated Positions**

The SAC will refill vacated positions by holding a special election for that position or by appointing a person for a term not to exceed six months. Vacant positions must be refilled by individuals from the same membership group as the person who vacated the position.

### **Executive**

The executive of the SAC (chair, secretary, and any additional member) shall be annually elected from among the members. This election will occur before September 30. The principal is an ex-officio member of the executive.

### **Meetings**

All SAC meetings will be open to the public. The SAC shall meet at least six times per year, including an annual general meeting.

**Agenda**

The chair of the SAC will develop the meeting agenda in timely consultation with the principal and other SAC members. The agenda will be distributed at least a week prior to the meeting's scheduled date.

**Minutes**

Minutes will be kept for each meeting and included in the school's official records. Once minutes are approved by the SAC, they will be available to the public.

**Support**

The school will provide, within the limits of its financial resources, support services, communication, and other reasonable assistance associated with the SAC's activities. These costs are expected to be minimal.

**Annual Report**

The annual report will be submitted to the school board and Department of Education, and will be made available to students, parents, and the community.

**Adopting/Amending By-laws**

By-laws will be adopted or amended by a consensus decision of SAC members. These will be forwarded to the school board for approval, and the by-laws or amendments to them become effective upon receipt of this approval.

**Quorum**

The quorum of the SAC will be a simple majority of its members. For example, a ten-member SAC (not including the principal) would have a quorum of six members.

**Decision Making Structure**

The SAC will make decisions using consensus. If a consensus is not reached, the decision will be delayed until the next meeting.

**Public Statements**

The SAC chair or vice-chair, in consultation with the principal, shall be responsible for making any public statements that may be required, on behalf of the SAC.

## APPENDIX C: SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council  
MEETING AGENDA  
October 15, 2011

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.
  - c.
6. New business (current items)
  - a.
  - b.
7. Special reports and/or presentations
  - a.
  - b.
8. School budget update
9. Next meeting date
10. Adjournment

## APPENDIX D: SAMPLE MEETING MINUTES

Turtle Bay Consolidated School Advisory Council  
October 15, 2011  
7:00 - 9:00 pm

**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: Principal and school improvement plan co-chair reported on the development of the school website which is part of the communication goal. The website was viewed and the SAC supported the work that has been completed.
5. Old business:
  - a. Seven members of the SAC attended the SAC workshop sponsored by the school board. Workshops on “how to run a meeting” and “sharing ideas” were held.
  - b. Principal updated the SAC on the status of the school board’s review of its policy on school fees for extra-curricular activities, on which the SAC had given input in the spring of the last school year. The updated draft policy will be circulated to SACs for final input within two to three months.
6. New business:
  - a. Representatives from the SAC agreed to attend the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new addition for the playground.
  - b. The SAC gave support to the school’s policy on students’ use of electronic devices during class time.
7. Next meeting date : November 02, 2011
8. Adjournment

## **APPENDIX E: 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.

We agree to use the following principles and procedures when making SAC decisions:

### **Principles**

- We will employ democratic processes and strategies in our decision making.
- All SAC members will have an opportunity to participate in decision making.
- SAC members are responsible for participating in decision making.
- All members will support SAC decisions once they have been made.
- Consultation will be carried out with parents, 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 (consensus, voting and consultation).
- 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 particular issues, where consensus cannot be reached.
- When we use a voting strategy, two-thirds will be required for a majority.
- If there is not a two-thirds majority, no advice will be given.
- 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 SAC newsletter, or other means.

## **APPENDIX F: APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LETTER OF AGREEMENT**

These are the criteria used by school boards and the Department of Education to assess proposed letters of agreement. They are included here as guidance for SAC members drafting such letters.

- Conformity to membership guidelines (see page 5 of this Handbook)
- List of members, position or group being represented, and duration of term
- Description of duration of the Letter of Agreement
- Description of decision-making procedure
- Description of meeting schedule
- Description of commitment to school improvement in the list of SAC commitments, as set out in the sample Letter of Agreement
- Establishment of written by-laws, included with the Letter of Agreement
- Acceptable commitments by the School Advisory Council, including a commitment to diversity, and absence of expectation of budgetary resources
- Acceptable commitments by the school board
- Acceptable commitments by the Department of Education
- Acceptance by the School Advisory Council, school board and Department of Education
- Conformance with school board and Department of Education policies

## **APPENDIX G: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

These guidelines are intended to ensure conduct is respectful, equitable, and peoples' contributions are valued and have meaning. This is fundamental to most citizens' willingness to volunteer their time, and feel their contribution is meaningful.

- The chair communicates the meeting time and location. The chair organizes the agenda in collaboration with the principal and provides 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 themselves on the agenda items.
- Each person wishing to speak should be permitted to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.
- The chair moves the meeting along and ensures it remains balanced.
- 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.
- Resources such as Roberts Rules of Order can be useful.

## **APPENDIX H: HINTS AND TIPS FOR BETTER SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Identify needs that community members can fulfill. It can be helpful to choose members who can contribute specific expertise, for example, an accountant as treasurer.

Where an SAC has student representatives (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, or Parent Teacher Association, or local volunteer organizations such as Kinsmen or Rotarians.

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.

Provide food: healthy snacks and beverages are a component of successful meetings.

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 of one another.

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

## APPENDIX I: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

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

- All elections will be conducted by secret ballot.
- 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 representatives are to be elected by parents 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 School Advisory Council shall arrange a new election for that position. Alternatively, the council may appoint a person for a term not to exceed six months. The person appointed must be selected from the membership group in which the vacancy occurred.
- Upon formation of the council, it is recommended that elected or appointed members have staggered terms so that a minimum of 50 percent 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 council from among the School Advisory Council from among its membership. The chair should normally be a parent or other community member.
- A community member cannot be a parent with a child in the school that they wish to serve.
- A teacher cannot serve as a parent or community member representative in a school in which they teach.
- Elected board members cannot serve as a SAC member in a school within the jurisdiction of their school board.
- SAC members who are absent from council meetings for three consecutive meetings may be removed from the SAC with a 2/3 vote of the full membership.
- The principal may not be removed from the SAC as an ex official member.

## **APPENDIX J: 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, fund-raising, parent-school communication and similar matters, and performs other duties as outlined in Sections 20 – 23 inclusive of the *Education Act*. (See Appendix K for specific provisions of the *Education Act* relating to School Advisory Councils).

### **How many members are there 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, 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 of students within the school. Members of an elected school board are not eligible to be a member of a 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. 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 school board for review 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 Department of Education for review and approval. Once 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 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 first approve changes to the by-laws.

**Are the decisions of the School Advisory Council final?**

No, the decisions of the School Advisory Council are not final. The SAC is an advisory body, and its purpose is to give advice to the school principal and to the school board from the point of view of the school community, on behalf of those affected by school decisions.

**How do you determine the make-up of the School Advisory Council executive?**

The SAC, through its' by-laws, can indicate how the executive of the SAC is chosen. There is always a SAC chair, but individual SACs may state, in the by-laws, the selection of a vice-chair or co-chairs. An executive must also include a secretary. The chair should be elected from the parent or community representatives.

**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, and 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 part of 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* as an advisory body to provide advice to the school principal and the school board. Therefore there is no legal liability.

**What is a steering or sub-committee?**

A steering or sub-committee is a group of people designated by the SAC to perform a specific task. Examples of a steering committee may include boundary reviews, school closure, or new school construction. Examples of sub-committees may include school discipline, or school accreditation.

**What is the annual report?**

The annual report describes the progress in the implementation of the school improvement plan and outlines what will be done in the next school year.

**How does a School Advisory Council communicate with the school community?**

SACs can communicate with its school community in a variety of ways, such as:

- Posting meeting minutes on a SAC school bulletin board, or school web site
- Including a SAC web page linked to the school web page
- Including SAC information in the school newsletter
- Setting up an information table during parent-teacher meetings
- Advertising special SAC functions on the school sign
- Distributing and publicizing the annual report

### **What is the difference between the School Advisory Council and the Home and School or other parent-teacher group?**

The School Advisory Council is a legislated body which receives its authority under the *Education Act*. A Home and School Association is a volunteer parent association that is part of the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Association, which is recognized by education partners in Nova Scotia as the voice of parents in schools. Other parent 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 Councils have a representative from a parent association which may co-exist in their schools included in their membership according to their by-laws. Both SACs and parent 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 who is responsible for the education of students of the province, including those in public schools. The Deputy Minister of Education oversees the administration of Nova Scotia's public education system. School boards are accountable to the Minister of Education and are responsible for the control and management of their schools according to the *Education Act*. The superintendent of each school board is responsible to oversee and carry out all aspects of administration of schools within their jurisdiction. Similarly, principals are accountable to the superintendent for their schools and students. 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?**

Principals are a valuable resource for SAC members in that they can guide members to appropriate information. SACs can provide advice to support the decision-making role of principals.

### **What are the roles of School Advisory Council members?**

Staff members, parent members, student members and community members:

- Provide advice to principals on school programs and policies
- Provide advice to school boards on school board programs and policies
- Communicate with the groups they represent, in order to articulate diverse views
- Work as a team to represent the best interests of students
- Participate in the writing and revision of the Letter of Agreement, by-laws and annual reports
- Recommend the school improvement plan to the school board

## **APPENDIX K: EXTRACTS FROM THE *EDUCATION ACT* REGARDING SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS**

The *Education Act* sets out the role, duties and powers for School Advisory Councils, students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, support staff and school boards. Relevant sections of the Act have been extracted from the Act, and included in this Appendix simply for convenient reference. Where precision is important, reference should always be made to the Consolidated Statutes on the Government of Nova Scotia web site, 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 parents of students attending the public school;
  - (b) a home and school association, parent-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 of a child attending the school, elected by the parents 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 situate.
- (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-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.

### **Parents**

- 25 (1) It is the duty of parents 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) Parents 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 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 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 parents 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 parents 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 parents 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 and Culture 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 parents 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) establish a regional student-discipline policy consistent with the Provincial discipline policy established by the Minister;
- (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.