

# School Advisory Councils

## Terms of Reference

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### Role of the SAC

- To promote communication, collaboration and involvement between home, school and community.
- To ensure that the Tlicho culture evident in instruction, school culture, and practice.
- To contribute to the school's learning environment by providing advice and recommendations regarding school goals and educational issues.
- To encourage parent education and provide a forum for the discussion of educational issues.

### SAC Membership

- Every parent, guardian, or caretaker of a student enrolled in our schools is a member of the SAC.
  - An Executive consisting of four members-at-large will be elected during the 1<sup>st</sup> SAC meeting of each year.
- An appointed member from the Community Government is a member of the SAC.
- A community elder is a member of the SAC.
- The school Principal is an ex-officio member of the SAC.

### SAC Operations

- The SAC meets 4-6 times per year with the first meeting being held within 40 days of the school year.
- The Principal delivers a report to the SAC at each meeting.
- The Principal prepares an agenda and chairs the meeting.
- SAC meetings should be held at times most conducive to participation.
- SAC meeting should be one hour in duration.
- Minutes kept from SAC meetings should be sent to the SAC Executive, TCSA Office, and posted in a public place.
- The Principal ensures that the minutes are kept. Minutes can be kept in a variety of forms ranging from literal notes to summary notes. Consistency is important.
- Simple Rules of Order should be followed (see appendix B)

### Making Decisions about SAC Business

The way School Advisory Councils make decisions may vary, depending on the issue. Two typical models for making decisions are consensus and majority vote. School Advisory Councils may combine both strategies to seek consensus from the school community and then confirm the decision by a majority vote.

### The Role of the Principal

The principal is the instructional leader who manages the day-to-day operations of the school and is a key member on school council who promotes cooperation between the school and the community. The



principal implements the policies of EC&E and the TCSA, ensures instruction is consistent with the curriculum, ensures the standards of education are met, evaluates the programs, maintains order and discipline within the school, evaluates and supervises teachers and supervises the evaluation and advancement of students.

On the SAC, the Principal:

- Promotes cooperation between the school and the community it serves
- Seeks input from parents and community on major decisions that affect the school
- Establishes, facilitates, communicates and encourages opportunities for parent and community involvement in school matters
- Encourages and supports the formation and continuous improvement of school council
- Interprets and shares results of territorial achievement tests and diploma exams
- Shares information about the school community
- Provides information on the programs in the school and the needs of the students
- Refers school council to the appropriate resource for information on laws, regulations and policies that affect school council
- Provides an opportunity for the school council to provide input into the school's education plan.

### **The Role of SAC Members**

- Operate with a philosophy that enhances the team approach to education and community development, viewing the school and the community as a working team
- Encourage feedback and participation from community groups and individuals
- Keep current on community events
- Communicate information of interest to the school council and the school community
- Share information from school council meetings with the community
- Have a clear understanding of the school council's goals
- Respect confidentiality
- Attend school council meetings
- Identify topics for agenda
- Work toward building a positive consensus within the school environment
- Create an inviting school council environment.

### **Advising the Principal**

School Advisory Councils may, at its discretion, advise the principal on any matter relating to the school. Some of the more common topics for discussion include:

- School's overall mission, philosophy, policies, rules and goals
- School's improvement planning
- School volunteers
- Fundraising
- School policy on use of facilities by the larger community
- Ways of reporting student achievement results to parents and public
- Methods of communicating with the public



- Promotion of the school in the community
- Programs offered in the school
- Extracurricular activities offered in the school
- Student attendance procedures, standards of student conduct and bullying issues
- Graduation and other school celebrations.

### **Advising vs. Directing**

The advisory role is intended to involve parents, high school students and the community in school-based decision making for which the principal is responsible. It is always important to respect authority and legal accountability. The principal has authority for instructional leadership and school management and the TCSA has authority for governing the school jurisdiction. School Advisory Councils also play a decision-making role in its own operations by:

- Deciding on which matters to advise
- Creating operating procedures to carry out its functions, which may be in the form of by-laws/operating procedures
- Developing operational policies in the school that are considered necessary to carry out its functions, with the support of the principal
- Choosing goals, setting plans and organizing activities to support the school council's purpose

### **Roles that are not to be taken on by a School Advisory Council include:**

The School Advisory Council is not a forum for the discussion of individual school personnel, students, parents or other individual members of the school community. With regard to individual concerns, the role of SAC is to advise the parent on how to present his/ her concern and to ensure that there is an appropriate protocol to hear about individual concerns or complaints at the school as well as the Regional level. It is important to be mindful that, as with all partners in education, there are limits to the work that can be done by a school council. Roles that are not to be taken on by a School Advisory Council include:

- School governance
- Employment issues
- School management
- Addressing parent/ community complaints
- Working on policies that deviate from school board policy
- Taking on the role of the teacher, principal or school board, each of which has professional and legal responsibilities within the school system
- Discussing performance or conduct of individual students, teachers, other employees, parents or community members during activities related to school council

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Alberta School Council Resource Manual

