

Frequently Asked Questions

Who can I contact regarding the school community council in my school?

The chair of the SCC and your school principal are good people to contact. You may also contact the school division office and ask to speak to the person responsible for SCCs in your school division. In the Ministry of Education, you may contact Kathleen Fisher, Research Officer, Strategic Policy Unit, Strategic Policy and Planning Branch, at 306-798-2232 and/or kathleen.fisher@gov.sk.ca.

Does every school require a school community council?

Provincial Law (The Education Act, 1995, Section 140.1) requires that each school must be represented by a SCC. This ensures that both urban and rural families and communities across the province have the same opportunities to participate in school planning and improvement processes.

Some communities may find that one council can effectively serve more than one school. Provisions in The Education Act, 1995 (Sections 140.2-140.4) allow for amalgamation or separation of SCCs. However, regardless of separation or amalgamation, each school must be represented by a SCC.

Who is responsible for providing support to SCCs?

School divisions are responsible for providing orientation, training and development, and networking opportunities for SCCs. Every school division must have at least one senior administrative employee who is responsible for the SCCs within the school division. Boards of education develop policies for SCCs. As well, boards establish two-way communication processes with SCCs. This strengthens both boards and SCCs in their ability to make a difference in the learning and well-being of students.

Have SCCs replaced all of the committees and councils that previously operated in schools?

SCCs have replaced all district (local) boards of trustees and local school advisory committees that were previously provided for in legislation.

Do some schools still have a home and school association or parent council as well as a SCC?

Although some schools continue to have home and school associations or parent councils, the majority of schools do not have these groups. In some cases, SCCs have established complementary groups or subcommittees to work on portions of the School Level Plan or to concentrate on other activities, such as fundraising.

How do SCCs differ from the home and school associations, parent councils or district boards that were previously associated with a school?

While SCCs may be involved in some or all of the activities that have always occurred at the school level, the key difference in every SCC is the mandated responsibility to:

- understand the community's needs, objectives and resources to support learning;
- participate in the development and implementation of a School Level Plan;
- participate in training and development to build its own capacity; and
- communicate annually about its plans, activities and accomplishments.

Why are some members of the SCCs elected and some appointed?

Elected members, the majority of whom must be parents of students enrolled in the school, represent the parents of the student population and the community, and are accountable to them.

Some appointed members, including the principal, a teacher and one or two students (in secondary schools) are required by the Regulations. As well, in schools where First Nations students who live on-reserve attend the school, those First Nations are invited to provide representation from their communities.

Additional members may be appointed to provide specific expertise, community links or perspectives that are considered important for a particular school. Optional additional members are appointed by the board in consultation with the other SCC members. These members may be appointed at any time.

By broadening representation, the council has the opportunity to become more representative of the diversity of the students it serves, including parents and family members who may not have run for election, or those who represent particular demographics within the school community, such as families of students:

- for whom English is an additional language or who are recent immigrants;
- who are First Nations or Métis;
- who live in particular geographic areas, if the school serves a number of communities;
- who have intensive or special needs; and
- who participate in dual track schools (e.g., French Immersion).

In addition to the above groups, a council may create stronger connections to its community by asking the board to appoint representatives from other organizations, such as:

- community organizations and services, e.g., the local library, police, recreation association or community association;
- Elders and grandparents;
- business and industry;
- human services professionals and organizations that provide support to the school, including health workers, social workers, counsellors, etc.;
- post-secondary and training institutions or career services;
- faith-based organizations and churches; and
- other organizations that support the achievement of the objectives in the School Level Plan.

Who gets to vote on SCC decisions?

Each SCC develops a Constitution that is approved by its board of education. The Constitution includes the decision making process used by the SCC, which might include consensus, voting or other means of making decisions. As well, it sets out who is involved in making decisions (i.e., all members, elected members, etc.).

What are the procedures for electing members to SCCs?

Election procedures for SCCs are defined in The Education Regulations, 2015. An annual election is held by secret ballot at a public meeting to elect members to a SCC. The board of education appoints a board employee to be the returning officer for each SCC in its school division. The returning officer provides at least four weeks' notice to the public before the meeting is held to elect SCC members. The notice states:

- the purpose of the meeting;
- the attendance or geographic area of the SCC;
- where policies or procedures regarding the election can be reviewed; and
- the date, time and location of the meeting.

Parents or guardians of pupils who attend the school and community members can stand for election to a SCC. Community members and parents or guardians of students who attend the school may cast votes in a SCC election.

What are the requirements for making appointments to SCCs?

The Education Regulations, 2015 state that the board of education, in collaboration with "the other members" of the SCC, will appoint members to the SCC. Boards will develop policies and processes for the appointment of members. Boards cannot arbitrarily make appointments without consulting with the SCC. Ideally, SCCs will have a significant role in identifying the members for appointment.

Is the board of education required to ensure that elected members represent the diversity of the student population?

It is strongly encouraged that each SCC should strive to establish a membership that is reflective of the student population, while keeping in mind the requirements of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This may require SCC members to actively recruit parents and community members who represent the diversity of their school. The SCC can also ask the board to appoint additional members to broaden representation on the council.

Do the Regulations require a representative to be appointed from each First Nation that sends students to the school?

Where students who live on a First Nation reserve attend a provincial school, the board of education is responsible for ensuring that First Nations communities are invited to provide representatives to that SCC. In determining how appointments will be made, board policy should be developed in consultation with the First Nation communities to ensure that it is flexible enough to respond to the needs of each community. It is recognized that it may not always be possible to appoint a representative from every First Nation community.

Should the appointment of a teacher be a specifically named person or can the appointment rotate among teachers at the school?

The Regulations specify that the position must be filled by a particular individual and require the board to appoint one teacher from the school. The Regulations also state that each appointed member holds office for two years. The SCC benefits from the continuity of having a particular individual in this position. The teacher representative is encouraged to keep other teachers informed and bring forward the views of teachers at SCC meetings.

Who qualifies as a "parent"?

Parent is defined as the natural father or mother of the student or the legal adoptive father or mother of the student.

Who qualifies as a "guardian"?

Guardian refers to a person who is not the natural parent of the student and who has been made responsible for the care of the child. This includes:

- a person who has lawfully and formally received the child to reside in his or her home and to be in his or her care or custody for the time being or until the child reaches the age of majority; and
- a person appointed or recognized in law as a guardian of the child.

Who qualifies as a "community member"?

Community members are defined in the Regulations as electors who reside within the attendance area for that SCC's school or, if an attendance area has not been defined, the geographic area for a SCC as determined by that school's board of education.

An "elector" is defined in section 23 of The Local Government Election Act.

Can a parent or community member be a member of more than one SCC?

A parent can be elected as a parent in each SCC where her/his children attend school. A parent can also be elected as a community member in one other SCC if the eligibility criteria are met. An individual can sit on only one SCC as a community member. For example, if a parent has children who attend two different schools and lives in another community where his/her children do not attend school, that parent could potentially participate in three SCCs.

Can community members run for positions on SCCs in both public and separate schools?

A community member would be an elector for either the public or separate system, but not for both. Therefore, an individual cannot be a "community member" in both school systems.

Who can be appointed as an "other appointed member"?

An "other appointed member" can be any member of the community who is not listed in the mandatory appointed members, who could provide benefit to the SCC. If a person in the community has experience or knowledge about work being undertaken by the SCC, this person could be appointed to the council to assist in the work being performed.

Some examples of "other appointed members" include:

- community organizations and services, such as the local library, police, recreation association or community association;
- Elders and grandparents;
- business and industry;
- human services professionals and organizations that provide support to the school, including health workers, social workers, counsellors, etc.;
- post-secondary and training institutions or career services;
- faith-based organizations and churches; and
- other organizations that support the achievement of the School Level Plan objectives.

Can a principal run for election to a SCC?

The principal is automatically a member of the SCC and, therefore, cannot run for election in the school in which he or she is the principal. The principal can run for election to a SCC in another school if he or she qualifies as either a parent or community member.

Can a board of education member also be a SCC member?

There is nothing in the Act or Regulations that would prevent a board of education member from running for election or being appointed to a SCC as a parent or community member. A board member who is also a SCC member must be careful to avoid a conflict of interest or appearance of bias. As well, he or she must ensure that information from one forum is not used for decision making in the other forum.

Can the principal be the returning officer for an SCC election?

The principal is a member of the SCC and, therefore, cannot be the returning officer. The returning officer, however, can be another employee of the board of education. Some school divisions have initiated a system in which staff members of one school will act as returning officers in other schools.

Is there a limit on how many teachers can run as parents or community members?

There is no limit as long as they meet the other criteria required by the Regulations. However, it should be kept in mind that the SCC functions best if its composition is reflective of the diversity of the student population. As well, since the SCC works in collaboration with school staff, the SCC and students will benefit from the breadth of experience and ideas contributed by parents and community members.

Can the SCC election be conducted by a show of hands?

The election must be conducted by secret ballot unless a position is (or positions are) acclaimed.

Roles and Responsibilities

What is the role of the SCC in relation to the board of education?

The Education Act, 1995 states that all the powers and responsibilities given to SCCs are to be exercised within the framework of board of education policies and procedures. The legislation also states that the board of education will establish the SCC and provides that every SCC will "comply with the Regulations and policies of its board of education." As well, the powers and responsibilities given to SCCs fall under the authority of the board's policies and procedures and must comply with The Education Regulations, 2015.

In some cases, the Act and Regulations provide only a guide. Examples include:

- setting the maximum number of members of the SCC, which is determined and set by board of education policies;
- the requirement in the Regulations that SCCs develop School Level Plans in accordance with the school division's strategic plan; and
- that SCC members may be reimbursed for expenses according to board policy.

What is a School Level Plan?

Each school creates a School Level Plan (The Education Regulations, 2015, section 3.92) that includes actions the school will take to support the school division's plan. It includes activities that the school is doing to:

- improve literacy achievement;
- provide equitable opportunities for all students;
- support students in transitions from the time they enter school and progress to post-secondary education or work; and
- accomplish other priorities of the SCC.

In cooperation with the school staff, each SCC is required to develop and recommend a School Level Plan to its board of education that is in line with the school division's plan.

Are SCC members paid for their involvement?

Elected and appointed members of SCCs are volunteers (The Education Regulations, 2015, Section 3.9) and, therefore, are not paid for their involvement. Some school divisions may reimburse their members for some expenses related to their responsibilities (e.g., meals, mileage). These payments are provided for in local board of education policies. Board of education policy information is available on the school division's website.

What is a Constitution and how is it developed?

One of the first activities of all SCCs was to create a Constitution. A Constitution is a guiding document for your SCC. It sets out how the SCC will conduct its day-to-day affairs and will provide direction for the council's ongoing work and how it will relate to other organizations. A SCC Constitution should include the following sections:

- structure and officers;
- schedule of meetings;
- means of public consultation and communications;
- code of conduct;
- decision-making processes; and
- complaint and dispute resolution procedures.

A full template for building your Constitution can be found in the Principal's Handbook on the Ministry of Education website. As well, your school division may have developed templates and guidelines for developing SCC Constitutions.

Your board of education will approve the Constitution and any amendments to it.

What is a Code of Conduct and why does a SCC need one?

A Code of Conduct is a component of the SCC Constitution that guides the behaviour and outlines the expectations of the Council's members. A Code of Conduct is an important part of the Council's Constitution as it sets out an agreed upon structure for positive, cooperative, student focused and forward looking relations among parents, the school and the community.