

What are school advisory councils?

School advisory councils (SAC) are advisory bodies to individual school principals, as well as the regional centres for education (RCEs) or Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP). They provide recommendations on a variety of issues related to their local school and the overall school system.

SACs help the RCEs and CSAP ensure that public schools and RCE- and CSAP-related services are meeting the needs of their communities and regions. SACs also support strong relationships between schools and families because research shows that when families are involved in a student's education, students do better.

Generally, individual SACs will serve only one school. However, schools also have the option to combine their resources and have one SAC for multiple schools. For example, two schools within one community or a family of schools (e.g., elementary, junior high, and high schools) may choose to share an SAC.

How are SACs changing this school year?

Last spring, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) announced it would be examining the role of SACs and looking at how it could be enhanced. Following this review, several changes will be introduced during the 2018–2019 school year. SACs will have

- a budget of \$5,000 plus one dollar per student to support the SAC's mandate and the operation of the school's SAC. If an SAC represents multiple schools, each school will receive its own budget of \$5,000 plus one dollar per student. The SAC will decide how this funding will be spent for each school.
- a stronger voice in policy development through improved two-way communication between the SACs, RCEs or CSAP, and EECD.
- more opportunities to learn and network through professional development opportunities and participate in regional and provincial meetings.
- more flexibility in their membership to help ensure it reflects the diversity of the school community.

Who can be a member of SACs?

SAC members include

- parents of current students
- community members
- school principals
- teachers
- school support staff

If students are in at least grade 7, they may also be able to be a member of their school's SAC, according to their principal's discretion.

For more information on requirements regarding SAC membership composition, please refer to the Ministerial Education Act Regulations or the SAC Handbook.

How does an SAC ensure that they have diverse membership?

The membership should reflect the diversity of the school community, including (but not limited to) African Nova Scotians, Indigenous persons, other racially visible persons, and persons with disabilities. An SAC can vary its membership during the school year to increase its diversity and encourage the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented members from the school community.

Which schools should have an SAC?

Any school in the province can form an SAC.

How many members do SACs have?

The number of members on an SAC varies from school to school but each council should have between five and 18 members. Each school has its own agreement that defines the structure of the SAC. As well, each council has bylaws outlining expectations for member participation. The structure and bylaws of SACs will vary from school to school.

For more information on a local SAC, speak with the school's principal.

How do I get involved with a local SAC?

Anyone who is interested in being a member of a local SAC should contact the school's principal.

How will SACs be consulted on policy decisions?

SAC members have expressed a desire for greater input into provincial policy development, coupled with opportunities to learn about policy issues and provide more meaningful feedback. EECD has committed to providing SACs with a stronger voice regarding policy development.

Will SACs be expected to make decisions about their schools, such as staffing or budget decisions?

SACs are meant to be focused on student achievement and wellbeing and are an important part of school operations and a valuable voice in many things that happen at schools. They will continue to have a role in decisions related to their schools, such as boundary changes, school start times, class caps, and school reviews.

Provincial legislation does not provide decision-making authority to SACs. Advice from SACs will be sought on budget decisions that relate to student achievement and wellbeing.

Why are SACs receiving a budget?

Government has committed to re-directing the funding that was provided to elected school boards to SACs. This funding is to support SAC operations and undertake special initiatives supporting student learning and outcomes in their schools.

Does this new funding for SACs replace the Student Support Grant?

No, this new funding for SACs does not replace the Student Support Grant (SSG). Schools will continue to receive the SSG.

Where can I find out more about the role of SACs?

The role of SACs and the requirements regarding their composition are outlined in the Ministerial Education Act Regulations.

For more information visit www.ednet.ns.ca/SAC.

What duties are SACs responsible for?

SACs are responsible for

- advising principals and RCEs or the CSAP on various matters such as the development of policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools, communication with parents and the school community, and any other matters referred to the SAC by the principal, RCE, CSAP, or the Minister.
- supporting student achievement, as well as student and community well-being, by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan.
- preparing an annual report outlining the work the SAC has done and how the funding was spent to support that work.
- establishing bylaws regarding SAC operations, including electing members and conducting meetings.
- participating in provincial and regional meetings, consultations, and professional development opportunities offered by the Minister, the RCE or CSAP, or another entity.
- determining how to best spend the SAC's budget to support its mandate.
- undertaking any other responsibilities assigned by the Minister and RCE or CSAP, in addition to the responsibilities set out in the school's SAC agreement.