

School Community Councils

*A Handbook for
Boards of Education
and Administrators*

School Community Councils: A New Way to Engage Parents and Community

i Introduction

This Handbook is designed to support the ongoing development of School Community Councils. It is based on the *Final Report of the Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel* (May 2005) and the Department of Learning *Policy Directions for School Community Councils* (November 2005). The Panel's purpose was to recommend a framework for how parents and communities might be meaningfully engaged in schools. The benefits of parent support for their children's learning and community involvement in schools are well understood. And, as School Divisions in Saskatchewan were being reorganized in 2006 it was timely to look at community and school level accountability, partnerships and opportunities to participate in educational decision-making.

Provincial legislation sets out the broad framework within which School Community Councils contribute to student learning and well-being. At the School Division level, governing policies and operational procedures set out in more detail how Councils are formed, relate to the school and Division and undertake their responsibilities. This Handbook explains the legislative framework and expectations and provides guidance and support for Boards of Education and Senior School Division Administrators.

Boards of Education approach their policy-making and governance responsibilities in a number of ways. In some circumstances a Board may wish to include very specific direction in each of these matters within their policy manual. Other Boards may choose to establish broad expectations or limitations for administrative consideration of these matters as components of operational procedure or guidelines. And, some combination of these two approaches may be taken by other Boards of Education. How Boards of Education and Administrators choose to separate policy and administrative responsibilities is not addressed in the Handbook. In certain cases issues are addressed as governing policy matters even though School Divisions may consider the issue to be an administrative concern. In either circumstance the following policy considerations are intended to be of assistance to those charged with the responsibility to determine how their School Division will establish and support School Community Councils.

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ii How to Use this Handbook

This Handbook addresses the special responsibilities Boards of Education and the Administration of School Divisions have to work with and support School Community Councils. The Handbook is intended to assist Boards and Administrators to develop policy, operational procedures and administrative practice as they relate to School Community Councils. Appendices include additional suggestions, procedures, forms and examples.

All users of the Handbook are encouraged to read the *Handbook for School Community Councils and Principals*. This will provide the background for suggestions for Boards and Administrators. Users are encouraged to make their own notes in the margins to list other references and their own thinking about School Community Councils and how they can improve student learning and well-being.

A Word for Boards of Education and Administrators

Boards of Education and their Administration are responsible for developing and implementing a renewed commitment to parent and community engagement in public education. Establishing School Community Councils includes responsibilities to:

- Develop governing policies and operating procedures to guide Council representative membership and elections (see Section 2.2 and Appendix 1.0);
- Determine what should be included in Council constitutions beyond the legislated minimum requirements (see Section 2.7);
- Decide how the Board and Administration want to relate to Councils and on what matters they plan to consult Councils (see Section 3.2); and,
- Provide support for School Leadership Teams (see Section 4.2) and to develop the capacity of Councils to fulfil their responsibilities (see Section 4.3).

Boards of Education and their Administration should expect School Community Councils, as integral, purposeful and valued components of School Division governance, to:

- Provide a strong understanding of the school community, the learning and well-being needs of families and students, and how they might be supported to achieve expected learning outcomes (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4);
- Engage parents and the community fully in school planning and improvement initiatives (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2);
- Be accountable to and improve communication with parents and community members (see Section 5.4);
- Approve school fees and fundraising initiatives in accordance with School Division operating procedures (see Section 6.1); and,
- Work jointly and cooperatively with the staff of the school to develop and recommend a Learning Improvement Plan (see Section 5.2).

The participation of parents and community members through School Community Councils is the primary channel for their representation and involvement in School Division governance. The Board of Education role is to take advantage of the opportunity that School Community Councils represent to enhance parent and community engagement.

Glossary:

Cross-cultural¹ is a term usually used in education to refer to a program of study or instructional method that uses information or approaches from more than one culture.

Culture¹ is the totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge of a group of individuals who share certain historical experiences. Culture is dynamic and often contains elements of conflict or opposition.

Ethnic group¹ is a group of people who have lived together as a single cultural group for many generations and have an identifiable combination of beliefs, language, religion, territory of national origin, customs and history in common.

Family² can be defined as any combination of two or more persons bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth, and/or adoption/placement and who, together, assume responsibility for variant combinations of some of the following: physical maintenance and care of group members; production, consumption and distribution of goods and services; and affective nurturing.

Minority¹ is a group with a certain set of characteristics that set it apart from the dominant group in a society – the group is usually aware of itself as having a depressed status relative to the majority and may be subjected to unequal and differential treatment. This group may be a numerical majority in the community or in world terms.

Parent² is used to refer to a child's significant caregiver. This may include a child's mother, father, grandparent, uncle, aunt, sister, brother, foster parent or other guardian. At times we use the terms "parent" and "family" interchangeably.

Race¹ is the physical features – skin colour, stature, head shape and hair type – that characterize a group of people. Persons of a particular race may vary individually, but they are characterized as a group by a combination of measurable features which have been derived from a common ancestor.

¹ Definitions adapted from *Partners at School*, Saskatchewan Education, 1988

² Definitions adapted from *Final Report of the Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel*, Saskatchewan Learning, 2005.

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1.0 A Framework for Achievement and Public Engagement

Chapter 1.0 of the Handbook begins with a review of the responsibilities and role of Boards of Education in relationship to School Community Councils. The Chapter also provides an overview and description of the vision for School Community Councils. Included are:

- *Statements of what's new; and,*
- *The areas of governing policy or administrative operational procedure that will need to be addressed.*

1.1 The Role of Boards of Education

The roots of public education in Saskatchewan took hold around kitchen tables in rural municipalities, villages, towns, and cities in the early years of the last century. Parent and public engagement was and is a central driving force behind the province's schools. Establishment of School Community Councils is a natural extension of this tradition.

School Division restructuring planned for 2006 led to the review of current structures for parent and community involvement in schools. The increased geographic and psychological distance between the school community and Boards of Education put the tradition of engagement at risk. In early 2005, the Minister of Learning appointed The Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel to review current practice and develop a framework for a local governance entity that would support student learning and well-being and encourage and sustain meaningful involvement of parents and community members at the school level.

A key feature of the framework is that Boards of Education are responsible for developing and implementing a renewed commitment to parent and community engagement in public education. Although the framework builds on Saskatchewan experience with public involvement in schooling, it is a step forward. The challenge for School Divisions, Boards and their Administration, is not to determine how they can continue to engage parents and community

as they are today but within the new framework. Rather, the challenge is to explore how the framework can provide new and enhanced opportunities for engagement.

The rationale for parent and community engagement in public education is obvious and clear. The children and schools are theirs. Parents are the primary educators both philosophically and practically, and for schools to succeed, for learning and well-being to be achieved, community support is required. School Community Councils provide the opportunity to build the school's connection to community and to reconnect where the relationship is failing.

Boards of Education engage the public to:

- Build support for public education;
- Solicit their input and guidance;
- Communicate School Division plans and initiatives; and
- Create positive, cooperative and supportive relationships between schools and their communities.

The strength of the Saskatchewan public education system improves as parents' and community members' sense of ownership grows. Their participation through School Community Councils is the primary channel for their representation and involvement in governance of the School Division.

The role of Boards of Education is to take advantage of the opportunity that School Community Councils represent. Their responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that a plan for establishing School Community Councils is in place;
- Adopt the necessary governing policies to guide formation, growth and maintenance of School Community Councils;
- Approve as necessary operational procedures; and
- Monitor and assess the success of the School Division in achieving the expectations the Board of Education has for School Community Councils.

The outcomes that Boards of Education could hope to achieve include:

- Successful establishment of School Community Councils representative of the students in the school;
- Effective parent support for their children's learning and well-being;

- Enhanced and genuine community engagement in the school;
- Coordinated and increased community supports for student learning and well-being;
- Active School Community Council participation in development, recommendation and implementation of the Learning Improvement Plan; and,
- Parent and community satisfaction with their enhanced role in public education.

Boards of Education manage and direct achievement of the outcomes they seek to achieve through their governing policies. The policies they develop might include:

- Parameters for establishing the representative nature of School Community Councils and for creating and approving Permanent Member positions;
- Protocols for consulting and communicating with School Community Councils;
- Expectations of their Administration;
- Criteria and processes for monitoring the success of School Community Councils; and
- Allocation of funds for School Community Council operating budgets.

The Director of Education and other Senior Administrators are guided by the Board's governing policies as they develop and implement more specific operational procedures. The procedures set out in some detail:

- The School Community Council Representative Member nomination and election processes;
- Matters to be included in and any limitations that might be placed on development of Council Constitutions;
- Expectations and constraints related to approval of fees and fundraising within the schools of the Division;
- Procedural expectations in respect to joint and cooperative development of the Learning Improvement Plan by the Council and staff of the schools; and,
- Any outcome, program and financial reporting requirements.

The School Community Council establishment and operational flexibility that is provided to Boards of Education is essential to their success. Boards will need to take advantage of the latitude available to them to ensure the School Community Councils in the School Division are well-suited to the students and communities they serve.

The representative makeup of Councils is a critical element of this flexibility. Because they are representative of the student composition of the school and knowledgeable about the community, School Community Councils are ideally suited to provide the Board of Education and School Division Administration with the advice they need to achieve the outcomes of the Continuous Improvement Plan. Similarly, Councils can provide well-grounded counsel to the Principal and staff of the school as the Learning Improvement Plan is developed.

The flexibility extends to establishing expectations and constraints on the role and responsibilities of Councils, the channels of communication they enjoy with the Board of Education and Administration of the School Division, the working relationship they have with the principal and staff of the school, and the supports the Division will provide for them. These critical decisions will contribute significantly to the success of formation, development and ongoing maintenance of School Community Councils within the School Division. The governing policies and operational procedures established now will capture the potential that exists in this new framework for parent and community engagement.

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Community Schools were established in communities and schools less able to support children and youth. The objective was to improve student learning success and to better engage parents and the community. **Community School Councils** were put in place to guide the programming and special initiatives in those schools. There are 98 Community Schools in Saskatchewan. School Divisions may want to explore any unique transition issues associated with Community Schools.

1.2 Governing Policies and Operational Procedures to Achieve the Vision for School Community Councils

The School Community Council framework developed by the Panel embodies the following key principles:

The School Community Council is an integral, purposeful and valued component of School Division governance.

School Community Councils are created through an election process. Minimum expectations for elections are set out in *The Education Act, 1995* and regulations. As a component of education governance, the Councils are integrated into Board of Education and administrative decision-making processes. The legislation provides a common standard that Boards of Education can build upon as detail is added to reflect local circumstances and expectations.

Formation of Councils is determined locally and set out in School Division operational procedures. School Community Council nomination and election procedures and School Division support for and supervision of elections are key areas of operational procedure on formation of Councils. School Community Councils replace all other

legislated entities including District Boards of Trustees, Local School Advisory and Community School Councils. Other entities such as Home and School Associations, independent School Councils, Parent Teacher Associations and Student Activity Parent Support Groups such as Band Parent Committees and School-Based Non-Profit Corporations are not replaced. However, there is a strong desire that all of these entities will be folded under School Community Councils. Depending on the purpose of the group, the Council may take on the responsibilities directly or may include the group as a sub-committee of Council.

Operational procedure also describes how the Board intends to consult with and engage Councils in Board and School Division Administrative decision- making. Boards of Education have substantial flexibility to address local circumstances and must consider carefully how that flexibility will be exercised.

What's new:

- *Boards of Education are responsible.*
- *One common entity at the school level.*
- *Councils are consulted and engaged.*

The School Community Council is inclusive of the community and representative of the students in the school.

The representative membership of School Community Councils reflects the composition of the student body of the school. While the membership of Councils focuses on the interests of all students, the voices of parents or community members reflective of unique student needs and aspirations are heard as Councils plan, decide and provide advice. Boards of Education must consider how this expectation can be achieved and, if not achieved, what might be done to ensure the full range of voices is heard.

School Community Councils, where students resident on reserve are enrolled in the school, include representative First Nations members. Boards will need to assess the implications as Council make up is considered and especially where students from more than one First Nation attend the school. These matters will need to be included in ongoing Board consultations with participating First Nations to ensure their understanding and support.

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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Council election procedures.*
 - *Engagement of Councils in Board planning, policy making and decision-making.*
 - *Board expectations for consultations with Councils in Division Administration decision-making.*
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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Council make-up reflective of student composition of the school.*
 - *Principal and teacher Permanent membership.*
 - *Appointment of other Permanent Members.*
-

The Principal of the school, or designate reporting to the Principal, and a teacher are Permanent Members of the School Community Council. The Division Administration may wish to provide some direction in respect to Principals delegating Council membership to another staff member and make it clear that teachers within the school should decide by their own methods how a colleague is named to the Council. At the high school level, one or two students are Council Members and the Division Administration may wish to set out how students are to be named in operational procedure.

Additional Permanent Members may be named by the Board of Education. These individuals may be included to provide advice on particular issues such as integration of health or family support services, to reflect a unique perspective, such as a Parish Representative named to a Council in a Roman Catholic School or an Elder named to a Council in a school that predominantly enrolls First Nations or Metis students, or to provide a programming perspective such as early special needs intervention, pre-Kindergarten, French Immersion, or the International Baccalaureate program. In Community Schools, the Coordinator plays a key role in building the school-community relationship and in supporting student well-being initiatives. Community School Coordinators may also be considered as possible Permanent Members of School Community Councils. In each case, these Permanent Members would play an advisory role although they would have full Council Member status.

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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Parent and community engagement.*
 - *Matters to be included in Council Constitutions.*
 - *Procedures to consult about and to approve Council constitutions.*
 - *Information campaigns to ensure staff, parents and public understand the role of Councils.*
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What's new:

- Representative composition of School Community Councils.
- Principal, teacher, student and other Permanent Member participation.

The School Community Council roles are clear and well understood.

The School Community Council role is two-fold. It is to develop shared responsibility for learning success and well-being of children and youth and to encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement in school planning and improvement processes. Councils provide mechanisms for parents and community members to influence the work of the school and to channel advice to the Board of Education and others. The focus of Councils is upon student learning and well-being and their challenge is to engage the parents

and community with the school in a meaningful partnership that supports their shared responsibility.

Board expectations about involvement of parents and community members, how they can provide input and advice and about what matters, how the Board and Administration listen to them and assure them that they are heard are important policy and operational considerations. These influence how Councils will facilitate parent and community involvement to inform the guidance and direction Councils provide to the school, the Board and community organizations and agencies. Councils develop Constitutions that embody how they will undertake their activities. A Code of Conduct is a key feature of the Constitutions as are decision-making and dispute resolution processes. Boards of Education approve Council Constitutions and set out their expectations about what is to be included through policy.

What's new:

- *Council Constitutions approved by the Board of Education.*
- *Responsibility to consult.*

The School Community Council responsibilities address key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being.

In keeping with the role of School Community Councils, their responsibilities are directed toward those factors, in the home, community and school, that are known to have an impact on student learning and well-being. The Department of Learning *Effective Practices Framework* identifies and describes these factors. The School Community Council focuses its attention through the Learning Improvement Plan and in particular on those areas of the Plan where the parent/community perspective and efforts are most appropriate and needed. This is achieved by addressing the following specific Council responsibilities:

- Understanding the community.
- Developing and recommending the Learning Improvement Plan for Board approval.
- Providing advice and approvals to the Board, school and others.
- Taking action on School Community Council initiatives.
- Reporting to parents and the community.
- Building School Community Council capacity.

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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Board expectations about and limitations on Council responsibilities.*
- *School staff and Council obligations to work jointly and collaboratively.*
- *Learning Improvement Plan development, recommendation and approval.*
- *Board and Administration supports for Councils.*

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The Panel believes that the Principal is the key actor in the relationship between the ...School Community Council... and the school. There is ample evidence in the research that the contribution of the school Principal makes a significant difference in the success of the school, students, parent/ community and school relationships.

*Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel
Final Report, 2005*

Provincial legislation, Board of Education governing policies and Administrative operational procedure provide the overall framework within which Councils fulfil these responsibilities. School Divisions may extend certain authority and responsibility to Councils in respect to the matters upon which they may provide advice, may describe how and when certain responsibilities should be addressed and may establish expectations to coordinate initiatives among School Community Councils or with other entities.

Governing policies and operational procedures also set out the support Councils can expect from the Board and School Division Administration.

What's new:

- *Focus of Councils on student learning and well-being.*
- *Joint and collaborative development and recommendation with school staff of the Learning Improvement Plan.*
- *Council accountability and reporting expectations.*

The School Community Council aligns its work with provincial and School Division goals and initiatives.

School Community Councils are focused on the same outcomes as are the Province and Board of Education. Council initiatives described by the Learning Improvement Plan are aligned with the provincial overarching Continuous Improvement Framework and address related Division goals and initiatives in the School Division Continuous Improvement Plan. Achievement of these outcomes is assessed and reported provincially and at the School Division level. School Divisions consider the means to achieve and support alignment of the work of Councils with provincial and Division learning and well-being outcomes for students.

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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Alignment of Council initiatives with Provincial and School Division outcomes.*
 - *Data sharing processes and supports for schools and School Community Councils.*
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What's new:

- *Provincial accountability framework, School Division Continuous Improvement Plan.*
- *Expectation that attention to outcomes will be closely aligned among School Community Councils, the Board of Education and the Province.*
- *Measurement and public reporting of provincial and School Division outcomes.*

The School Community Council is accountable, transparent and responsive in its relationship with parents and school community.

School Community Councils actively engage parents and community members in matters of concern related to public education. The issues they address, decisions they make and advice they provide are guided by the students, parents and community they serve. The Council ensures that the nature of the community in which it is situated is accurately reflected in its deliberations by collecting and sharing appropriate information with the school, Board of Education and others.

Attention is paid to the relationship that is established among parents, community and the Council. Openness, trust and respect are the desired characteristics of the relationship and are consistently and determinedly pursued.

The Councils share accountability for learning and well-being outcomes with the school, Division and province and regularly report on their activities to parents, the school, and the community.

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Governing policies and operational procedure address:

- *Public accountability reporting.*
 - *Desired relationships.*
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What's new:

- *Council responsibility to understand and accurately reflect the school community.*
- *Clarity of expectations about relationships among the Council, school, parents and community.*
- *Public accountability reporting responsibility of Councils.*

As Boards of Education and their Administration respond to the opportunity that School Community Councils present, they will want first to determine:

- The governing policy and operational procedure development process;
- Extent of parent, public and staff involvement in developing the policies and procedures; and
- How the vision, beliefs and culture they are seeking to establish and sustain within the School Division will be supported by the local framework for Council formation and operations.

2.0 Establishing School Community Councils

Chapter 2.0 of the Handbook is a description of the matters that School Divisions will need to consider to establish School Community Councils. Included are operational considerations related to:

- Council elections;
- Terms of Office;
- Council Officers;
- Merger of two or more Councils;
- Delegation of responsibilities; and
- Council constitutions.

Boards of Education are responsible to establish School Community Councils at each school. School Community Councils replace all other local governance entities established under the authority of the Province or Boards of Education.

There are, however, unique constitutional and other circumstances that must be addressed. For example, the Conseils d'Écoles within the Division Scolaire Francophone are the equivalent of School Community Councils elsewhere but operate somewhat differently in respect to the delivery of certain language-based programs. Special provisions will be developed by the Province to address this circumstance.

Other situations are addressed more directly by Boards of Education in response to the unique circumstances or relationships of the schools or communities they serve. Shared governance and capital equity arrangements with First Nations and among School Divisions are further unique circumstances Boards and their Administration will need to accommodate. It may be helpful for Administrators to compile an inventory of agreements between the School Division and other entities, such as municipalities, that may encumber the Division and restrict the latitude of Councils. This may be particularly important in respect to Council access to and use of the facility for parent and other programs.

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The overriding consideration and goal ...is to encourage and support the involvement of parents in their children's education. There should be no barriers to their involvement.

*Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel
Final Report, 2005*

2.1 Minimum Procedures for Election of School Community Councils

The minimum procedures for the nomination and election of **Representative Parent and Community Members** of the School Community Council are that:

- The Board of Education names one employee, other than the Principal of the school, as an Election Supervisor for the purpose of the nomination and election of the School Community Council;
- Public notice is given of the Annual Meeting held to elect Representative Members;
- Parent and community members are elected by secret ballot at a public meeting; and,
- Persons eligible to vote and run for membership include: parents of students who are enrolled in the school (including parents who do not reside within the attendance area of the school); and, electors that reside within the school attendance area.

Policy Directions for School Community Councils
Department of Learning (November 2005)

These provisions specifically do not limit or restrict the election or participation in voting of parents of students who may be employed by the School Division and work in the particular school. The role and responsibilities of School Community Councils do not address matters that may involve potential conflicts of interest and employees who may be elected to Councils are expected to represent parent, student and community interests not staff interests.

Procedural considerations address how these minimum standards are to be implemented. These include:

- The form and content of the public notice of nominations and elections of School Community Councils;
- Provision of election procedure information such as a *School Community Council Election Question and Answer* that explains Division policy on elections;
- The information to be gathered from nominees including their name, address and contact information, and where the Board of Education has identified components of the student composition or school program to be represented proportionately on the Council, the student component or school program the nominees intend to represent; and,



Representative Members:

- *5-9 elected parents and community members*
- *1 or 2 secondary students*
- *1 or more representatives for First Nations students living on-reserve*



Permanent Members:

- *Principal or Designate*
- *A Teacher*
- *Others designated by the Board of Education in consultation with the Council*

- The duties of the Election Supervisor including collection and safe storage of candidate nominations and related information, preparation of ballots, arrangements for ballot distribution and counting, dispute resolution (contested election), provisions for breaking election ties and the official destruction of ballots.

2.2 School Community Council Election Procedures

School Community Councils are comprised of two kinds of Members: **Representative Parent and Community Members** (with parents in the majority) and **Permanent Members**.

Parents form the majority of the Representative Membership, which includes:

- *five to nine elected parent and community members that are representative of the student demographics in the school including program specific demographics (special needs, French Immersion);*
- *one or two secondary student members in schools offering 10, 20 or 30 level credits; and,*
- *one or more representatives of First Nations that have students who live on-reserve and are enrolled in the school.*

Permanent Members include:

- *the Principal or designate reporting to the Principal of the school;*
- *one teacher; and,*
- *other members approved by the Board of Education through two-way consultation with the School Community Council.*

Within these parameters, the size and membership of the Council is further articulated through Board of Education policy or administrative operating procedures. The considerations for School Divisions include:

- Determination of the representative groups and proportion of the student population of each school that should be represented on each Council.
- Establishing nomination procedures.
- Determination of the election approach to achieving appropriate representation.

- Deciding on elections at-large or by representative group.
- Creating standard forms for Nominations and Ballots.
- Providing for Council membership of First Nations representatives.
- Establishing procedures for naming or electing Principals, teachers and students to Councils.
- Establishing procedures for naming other Permanent Members to Councils.

These operational procedure considerations are discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

2.2.1 Determination of the representative groups and proportion of the student population of each school that should be represented on each Council.

The reason for providing for the components of the student population to be represented on the School Community Council is to ensure their voice is heard. This is particularly true where sensitivity to race or ethnic origin or expression may be a consideration in student learning success or well-being. The Representative Member's role is to represent the voice of the parents and community members of the particular student group but always to act in the best interests of all students attending the school. There may be other circumstances where it would be beneficial to ensure a particular voice is heard, for example that of students with exceptional learning needs, and these too may be accommodated by a Representative Member. Alternatively, a Board in consultation with a School Community Council may designate a Permanent Member on the Council for such a voice to be heard.

The question before School Divisions, however, is "For what components of the student population should representative voice be assured?" There is no single answer to the question nor one mathematical formula that can be applied. School Divisions will need to consider each circumstance, apply the principles that guide their decisions, and make a determination for each school. Ideally, Divisions would be able to consult with School Community Councils as they make these decisions but, in the initial circumstance, this will not be possible. There are other similar entities in place in most schools such as District Boards of Trustees and Local School Advisory Committees and for now Boards may wish to consult them. However, this is a local decision and in some situations these consultations may not be possible.

Within the Saskatchewan context, certain components of the student population would benefit from representation. First Nations students living off-reserve, Metis students, and other students who are a visible minority are components that should be considered. New Canadians may be a visible minority but many are not and this component in certain circumstances should also be considered.

Students with exceptional learning needs or in particular programs, such as French Immersion, may be considered as a component of the student population that should be represented. This, however, should be approached cautiously and the reasons for representation well understood and accepted. In some circumstances provision of “program” voices may be divisive in the school or the voice could be heard in a different way such as through consultations the School Community Council may have with all parents and community members interested in the particular program. Too, students in particular programs could be represented by an individual designated as a Permanent Member of Council.

Another possible component might be based on residence, rural or urban, or, where two or three communities send students to school in one community, it may be beneficial to ensure representation for each community. Faith may be a consideration in some circumstances but in public schools a good deal of caution should be exercised in establishing Faith-based representation. And, there may be situations where agreements between School Divisions or with First Nations or other entities may include provision for representation and these will need to be taken into consideration. In general, however, the number of student components to be represented should be kept to a reasonable minimum.

Once it has been decided what components of the student population might be represented, the population of each school will need to be considered to determine if the number of students of that component is sufficient to warrant representation. The Division must decide on the minimum number of students to constitute a “component” and this number may vary by type of student and school. For example, Special Needs students may constitute a “component” requiring representation where there is a particular program offered in a school but not in circumstances where exceptional students are fully integrated. The numbers of New Canadian students is often proportionately much smaller than the proportions of other students. In this case it may be determined that there would be one representative for this component regardless of how small the

numbers are. Similarly, it may be determined that there should always be at least one Metis representative regardless of the number of students.

Of course, representation also depends upon the willingness of parents and community members that are of that component to participate in the work of the Council. In some cases it may take several elections to establish the desired representation and in the mean time alternative ways for their voice to be heard may need to be established.

.....

**School Community
Council
Nomination Form**

Nominee: _____

Contact Information:

*I am standing for
election as (Check One):*

A Parent:

A Community
Member:

**Student Component
I am seeking to
Represent:**

*Supporting Parent or
Community Member:*

Name:

Signature:

2.2.2 Establishing nomination procedures.

The minimum legislated nomination expectation is that nominations may occur at the Annual Meeting following public notice of the School Community Council Annual Meeting and elections. The procedure would be for the Chairperson of the Annual Meeting to call for nominations for each representative component (if any) and, once the nominees have established their credentials as a parent or community member (voter) and as a member of the representative group (if that is the case) and have accepted the nomination, to close the nominations and call for the election if required. The Division may wish to make explicit its expectations for this process and suggest neutral and knowledgeable individuals to chair elections at the Annual Meetings.

Boards of Education may establish nomination procedures that expand on this minimum requirement. It is likely beneficial to provide for a written nomination procedure in advance of the Annual Meeting. Although this would not necessarily eliminate the possibility of nominations at the Meeting, it would enable the Election Supervisor to compile the nominee credentials in advance of the meeting and, where necessary, encourage the participation of parents and community members as nominees and voters.

A simple form with space for the nominee's credentials and for the signature of a parent or community member supportive of the nomination might be standardized for the School Division. A flyer or brochure explaining the process, numbers of desired Representative Members and answering related procedural questions, especially nominee and voter qualifications, could also be developed well in advance of the nomination period.

2.2.3 Determination of the election approach to achieving appropriate representation.

Where components within the student population have been identified elections will need to be conducted in a manner to ensure that the student demographics are proportionately represented. It will be necessary to make a substantial effort to ensure that the election process successfully achieves the desired representation. However, it is possible that parents and community members do not offer for nomination and election and the representative conditions are not met. In this circumstance, the Division may choose to ensure parent and community members are aware of the student demographics and implications for Council composition but provide for a second election at-large without defined groups. This latter alternative may result in the desired proportions but, if not, the proportions could be addressed in elections the following year.

2.2.4 Deciding on elections at-large or by representative group.

Where components of the student population have been identified it may be directed that elections be conducted within each representative component. Several ballots would be prepared, one for each component group including for those who are representative of the entire student body, and elections would be conducted separately. This has the advantage of simplifying the election process but can be divisive. As well, this would require that all voters self-identify by representative group to participate in the elections for their Representative Member.

Although it may be more complicated, elections-at-large where all voters elect all Members of the Council may be preferred. The approach gives all Council Members a stronger sense of accountability to the entire parent and community body and reinforces their duty to act in the best interests of all students.

In either case, an over-riding consideration is that the majority of the School Community Council be parents of students attending the school. Although it is anticipated that the vast majority of interested individuals will be parents, this must be taken into consideration during both nomination and election processes.

.....

*Elections At-Large
Ballot*

***Metis Student
Component
Representative***

Vote for Two:

<i>Candidate A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate B</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate C</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***New Canadian Student
Component
Representative***

Vote for One:

<i>Candidate A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate B</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***Other Representative
Members***

Vote for Four:

<i>Candidate A</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate B</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate C</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate D</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate E</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Candidate F</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Election Note:

The majority of Representative Members must be parents of students attending the school. This may result in a non-parent nominee receiving more votes than a parent nominee not being elected.

2.2.5 Creating standard forms for Nominations and Ballots.

It may be beneficial to standardize the forms to be used for School Community Council elections throughout the School Division. This enables the Administration to compile standard information campaigns and assists to reduce confusion among those who are expected to participate. Nominations and ballots are two forms that could be standardized. Of course, representative groups will vary from school to school but this can be accommodated within a common format. Election information materials can also be standardized as can be the answers to questions Election Supervisors may be asked.

2.2.6 Providing for Council Membership of First Nations representatives.

First Nations students attending provincial schools off of their reserve constitute a special case where they are to be represented by First Nations parents or community members. These students are to be represented proportionately. Board of Education and Administration consultations with the respective First Nations assist to develop the necessary procedures for Council membership. There is no provincial limitation on the numbers of First Nations representatives or on their term of office. It should be noted that these representatives are in addition to First Nations Members who are representative of students who live and go to school off reserve.

2.2.7 Establishing procedures for naming or electing Principals, teachers and students to Councils.

School Community Councils include the Principal or a designate who reports to the Principal, a teacher and one or two students. Operational procedures set out how these Members are to be elected or named.

In most situations, it is desirable for the Principal of the school to be a member of the Council. However, in a large high school it may be advantageous to rely upon a Vice Principal to fulfil this responsibility. These decisions may be delegated to the Principal or, in some cases, it may be advisable to be more directive.

A teacher is also to be named to the Council and it may be directed how this is to occur or that the decision on process and representative be left to the teaching staff of the school. The role of the teacher representative is to bring the “classroom perspective” to Council planning and other initiatives.

Communications between the Council and school staff should normally be through the Principal of the school, requests for information or guidance from the staff should be made through the Principal and consultation with the staff should be with the “staff” not with an individual staff representative. Rather, a teacher on Council can provide a voice that will assist the other Members of the Council to understand the classroom context, the role and responsibilities of teachers in the school and how Council advice or decisions might impact on the classroom and teachers. School Community Councils need to be cautious that they do not expect the Teacher Member of Council to speak for all teachers or allow themselves to get into a situation where they may inadvertently circumvent the responsibilities of the Principal or become embroiled in personnel issues. At all times, Councils must respect the unique status and responsibilities of each Member and the formal communication procedures and protocols that are established within the school and School Division.

Provisions also are made for Council membership of one or two secondary students enrolled in schools offering 10, 20 or 30 level credits. The decision about how these students are named or elected may be left to the Principals of individual schools or set out in operational procedures. The role of students is to provide a student perspective on the matters before Council. This can be achieved in a variety of ways and does not necessarily require that the student be a Student Representative Council member.

As well, Councils may wish to convene student forums from time to time to hear from larger numbers of students or from particular groups such as those involved in athletic or music activities or students enrolled in particular programs or who may be at-risk. A good deal of work will need to be undertaken with the student body to ensure it understands the role and responsibilities of School Community Councils and the expectations for student involvement. As explained in the *Handbook for School Community Councils and Principals*, consideration will need to be given to how student participation will be supported.

2.2.8 Establishing procedures for naming other Permanent Members to Councils.

Additional Council Members may be named by Boards of Education. This may be to provide particular advice, such as matters related to School^{PLUS} initiatives, to balance demographic representation, to extend process support such as for planning, or to enable membership of representatives of special programs located in the school.

Boards of Education are expected to consult with School Community Councils as additional Permanent Members are determined or may respond to Council requests for special representation. The procedures for these consultations should be addressed by Board governing policies or by Administrative operational procedures.

Boards may wish to include Community School Coordinators as Permanent Members of Councils. These staff members have traditionally been on Community School Councils and are well respected for their contribution. In addition, these schools have additional responsibilities for student well-being and the Coordinators provide essential support for the Council, school and Principal. Consideration for inclusion as Permanent Members for these and other similar individuals is appropriate.

Although these Members are “Permanent” they only need to be permanent for the period of time they are required. As Boards of Education review Council composition, the participation of these Permanent Members can be a matter that is regularly reconsidered.

2.3 School Community Council Member Terms of Office

Provincial legislation sets out the terms of office of School Community Council Members:

- The term of office for Representative Parent and Community Members of School Community Councils is two years with no limit on the number of consecutive terms that may be served.
- One-half of the Representative Parent and Community Members of School Community Councils is elected each year. In the first year, one-half of the Members should be elected for two-year terms with the remaining Members being elected for one-year terms to establish the staggered terms.
- Vacancies among Representative Parent and Community Member positions, in certain circumstances, may be filled by

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The Terms of Office of First Nations and Student Members of School Community Councils is not provincially regulated but is to be established by Boards of Education.

Board of Education appointment in consultation with the School Community Council. Circumstances that would dictate this might include an instance where the position needs to be filled for a period of time before a regular election will be held.

Boards of Education are responsible for setting the terms of office of other Council Members. The term for First Nations representatives of students living on reserve will need to be worked out with the leadership of each First Nation. Chiefs and Councils have often established regular terms for elections and appointments to suit their circumstances and these arrangements should be known and considered. The terms of student representatives may reflect different considerations such as a desire to increase student leadership opportunities.

The terms of office of Permanent Members are also set by Boards of Education. The Principal's term would be for the period of the appointment. Teachers' may wish to serve for a single year or to share responsibilities for other periods of time. The rationale for the terms of other Permanent Members named by the Board will likely vary in relation to the reasons for their appointment. Perhaps the term of office could be set out individually as the orders for appointment are approved.

2.4 School Community Council Officers

Provincial legislation sets out the Officers of School Community Councils:

- The School Community Council selects its officers from among its Representative Members (Parent, Community, Student and First Nations Members). Officers include, at a minimum, a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. Other officers (such as a Treasurer) may be named within the Constitution of the School Community Council.

The Constitutions of School Community Councils will list the Officer positions and set out their responsibilities. This is addressed in more detail in Part 2.7 below and in the *Handbook for School Community Councils and Principals*.

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Election Note:

Staggered Terms of Office can be achieved in several ways. At the first election, half of the Parent and Community Representative Member Council positions can be designated as 1-year terms. These will expire in the following year and elections would be for the normal 2-year term. Alternatively, if there is an election the half of the candidates receiving the most votes could be elected for 2-year terms and the balance for 1-year terms.

2.5 Merging Two or More School Community Councils

Provincial policy provisions enable two or more School Community Councils to merge into a single School Community Council. This may be appropriate where there is one elementary and high school in a community that operate very closely or where several urban elementary schools work closely with the high school the students ultimately attend.

There may, however, be situations where the merger of two or more School Community Councils results in representation that places one group or another at a disadvantage or that confounds the intent of providing for representation of the student composition. Boards should be cautious to ensure that any mergers do not frustrate the general purpose of Councils or undermine Board policy intentions. The merger process begins with the involved Councils who must seek the Board of Education's recommendation for approval to merge prior to the Minister of Learning considering the request.

2.6 Delegation of Responsibilities

The Board of Education may delegate additional responsibilities to the Council. While this is within the discretion of each Board, it is expected that delegated responsibilities should not detract from the central role of Councils. Responsibilities that are the legislated duties of Boards can not be delegated. Councils may participate in decision-making or provide advice on these matters but the responsibility must remain with the Board of Education.

.....

Council Constitution

- *Vision*
- *Guiding Principles*
- *Structure and Officers*
- *Schedule of meetings*
- *Means of Public Consultation and Communication*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Decision-making Processes*
- *Complaints and Concerns Procedures*
- *Evaluating Council Operations*

2.7 School Community Council Constitutions

School Community Councils are to develop and submit their Constitutions to the Board of Education for approval. The Division may wish to set out a timetable for submission, a schedule of matters to be included and other requirements. For example, there may be a Division-wide plan for public consultation and School Community Council plans should avoid duplication of effort. Too, Boards may have adopted a Code of Conduct or the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Code of Ethics and may expect Councils to conduct themselves similarly.

School Community Councils may require special assistance to develop their decision-making and complaints and concerns procedures. The experience of Board of Education Members and School Division Administrators in these matters can be very helpful to Councils. Time should be taken to consider how Councils might work there way through

and agree upon these important processes. It may be helpful for School Divisions to encourage Councils to focus on certain parts of their Constitution initially, say Structure, Meeting Schedule and Code of Ethics, and leave Communications, Decision-Making and Complaints Procedures until there is time to provide workshops and additional suggestions or examples.

Boards of Education will inevitably be asked to enforce Council constitutions. Because Boards provide their approval there will be an expectation that Boards will stand behind them and ensure they are adhered to. This is best accomplished by providing Council development opportunities, ensuring Council Members are familiar with their Code of Conduct and by providing support to facilitate problem solving as it is needed.

A proactive and positive approach to conflict avoidance is preferred but the Board and Administration should be prepared when problems arise. Thought will need to be given to how enforcement should be undertaken, how it might be initiated, what investigative or referral process is needed to ensure impartiality and fairness, and what penalties (if any) might be imposed. All of these are procedural questions that should be addressed in advance of a problem arising. The procedure the Board of Education follows when a Board Member is alleged to have violated their Code of Ethics may provide a template for School Community Councils.

Key Constitution-related questions include:

- What guidance should be provided and in what form?
- What limitations or constraints might be imposed?
- What approval procedures and timeline will be established?
- Can certain parts of the Constitutions be “fast-tracked” and others be developed later?
- How will “infractions” of Board approved Constitutions be dealt with?

How Council Chairpersons might Deal with Member Infractions of the Council Constitution

- 1. Understand the nature of the concern.*
- 2. Discuss and resolve the concern confidentially with the Member.*
- 3. If step 2 fails, provide a written statement of concern and recommendation to cease.*
- 4. If step 3 fails, seek the Council’s sanction of the Member’s action.*
- 5. As a last resort, and with the support of the Council, seek the resignation of the Member.*

3.0 School Community Council-Board of Education Communications and Relationships

Chapter 3.0 of the Handbook addresses the relationships and means of communication among the Board of Education, Administration and School Community Councils. Included are policy considerations related to:

- The School Division public consultation plan;
- Matters the Board will consult about with Councils;
- Advice sought from Councils;
- Consultation on Administrative matters; and,
- Division-wide consultation processes.

Boards of Education are responsible for establishment, development and support of School Community Councils. Councils are expected to exercise their responsibilities independently but within the provincial and School Division legislative, policy and procedure framework. Positive communications, respectful relationships and continuous support are at the core of this balance between the provincial and School Division framework and School Community Council independence.

Board of Education planning, policy-making and decision-making is generally guided by consultation with students, parents, community and staff. As local governments, Boards of Education are strongly committed to ensuring all voices within the School Division are heard and understood. School Community Councils are an important forum for listening and understanding. Too, Councils are a key avenue for Board communication with parents and school communities.

The consultation-related considerations for Boards of Education and their Administration are discussed in the following sections.

3.1 Formation of the School Division plan for consultation on key planning and decision items.

How consultations are expected to occur within the School Division, who is expected to be involved, what processes will be used, and when in the strategic or annual planning cycles consultation is to occur are questions answered by School Division communication plans. The general expectations for involvement of School Community Councils would be set out within the plan.

3.2 Determination of the matters School Community Councils will be consulted about.

With the exception of certain matters set out in legislation, Boards of Education may consult, or not, on any matters they choose. Generally, the public expects governments to plan and decide most matters without elaborate consultation processes. On the other hand, depending on the overall significance of an issue, its cost and often its impact in the local school are the key determiners of the need for consultation.

Establishment of School Community Councils and their responsibility to understand the school community and advise in the interests of student learning and well-being serves Boards of Education and their Administration well in their need for knowledge about policy or decision impacts in the schools of the Division. And, while it is helpful to have the necessary information to accurately anticipate the outcomes of all decisions, consultation priorities will need to be established. In addition to questions about Council composition and merger with other Councils, the following may be matters for consultation with School Community Councils:

- School closure and grade discontinuation;
- Religious observances;
- Language of instruction; and,
- The School Division strategic plan and annual budget.

3.3 *Establishing expectations about advice the School Community Councils should provide to the Board of Education*

In keeping with the role of Councils in support of student learning and well-being and about engaging parents and community, Councils should plan to offer information and advice to the Board of Education about:

- School programming requirements;
- Student learning and well-being needs; and,
- Community resources to support the school.

Boards of Education may wish to provide guidance to School Community Councils about the kind of advice that would be helpful to the Board.

3.4 *School Division Senior Administration consultation with School Community Councils.*

School Division Senior Administrators consult closely with staff and others as they fulfil their administrative responsibilities. School Community Councils are a further source of advice for School Division Administrators and may expect to be consulted on certain administrative decisions. The expectations of both Councils and Administrators in this regard should be clarified to ensure there are no misunderstandings about these processes. In this respect, Principals will need to be kept informed of consultation expectations and any role they may play in facilitating Council input to Board of Education or administrative decisions.

There is no limitation on what School Community Councils might be consulted on however, the choice of matters should not distract Councils from the primary focus of their work nor should they be consulted on matters of limited consequence or impact in their particular school.

3.5 *Establishing Division-wide consultation mechanisms.*

Boards of Education and their Administration will need to give consideration to the structures they might establish at the Division level to consult with School Community Councils. Division-wide opportunities for all Councils and the Board to meet may occur

once or twice a year as School Community Council development opportunities are provided. However, as an ongoing mechanism this may be cumbersome and overly expensive. Some School Divisions may establish Division-level entities that include the Chairpersons or other representatives of School Community Councils or establish a structure at the regional or high school attendance area level. These smaller meetings may delegate representatives to meet with the Board of Education or Administration on certain issues or to consult on matters identified by the Board or the Councils.

Some schools or types of schools are unique and may require additional means of consultation or involvement. Community Schools receive special funding consideration and have unique programming and community involvement responsibilities. Schools located on Hutterite colonies have developed particular ways to relate to the Administration of School Divisions. Schools established under co-governance arrangements may require a different form of communication. And, Home Schooling parents may expect to be involved in a particular way that involves the School Community Council in their attendance area. Thorough consideration will need to be given to these and other situations where special means to consult and coordinate across the School Division may be needed.

4.0 Administrative Support

Chapter 4.0 of the Handbook discusses the administrative supports that School Community Councils will need to achieve their purpose. Supports included are:

- School Division financial allocation;
- School-based Leadership Team; and
- Council development.

School Divisions are expected to establish a Senior Administrative contact for each School Community Council to ensure their successful implementation and operation. The contact is to provide advice, support and communication assistance and to create a constructive relationship between the Board of Education and School Division Administration and School Community Councils.

The Administration of School Divisions will need to establish expectations that can be met, respectfully administer the relationship with School Community Councils and direct the support that is to be provided. The principles that underpin the School Division culture Administrators hope to create are the appropriate principles to guide their relationship with Councils and to inform their decisions about support they will provide. These of course will vary somewhat from Division to Division but none will vary from the provincial vision for integral, purposeful and valued School Community Councils. Too, and in keeping with an improved focus on outcomes, Administrators should be clear about the results they plan to achieve through the type and level of supports they provide.

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The Senior Administrative contact for School Community Councils is "...a person they could call with questions about procedure, about School Division policy and with whom they could coordinate consultations with the Division."

*Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel
Final Report, 2005*

4.1 School Division Financial Support for School Community Councils

School Community Councils will require some funding to cover their operating expenses. Meeting, communication and in some circumstances transportation expenses are normal costs of operation. However School Community Councils will undertake initiatives to identify student learning and well-being support needs, to consult with parents and the community, and to build relationships and provide advice to others. These initiatives will add some cost to their work that should properly be borne by their own budget. School Community Councils may

also wish to engage some expert assistance from time to time and this will be a further operational cost. An annual allocation within the School Division budget for the operation of School Community Councils might be considered. The amount and limitations on its use will vary depending on location and types of responsibilities Councils are expected to fulfil.

4.2 Support for the School Leadership Team

Principals and teacher leaders in schools will need the support of the Division to develop their capacity to work effectively with School Community Councils. While there are many school-based administrators who are fully capable of discharging this responsibility there are others for whom establishment of Councils will create unfamiliar expectations. Provision of professional development opportunities, administrative time and administrative support is an expectation School Division Administrators will need to address. With experience, these initiatives will become a normal part of School Division annual planning but at this time of increased expectation and Council implementation priority will need to be given to these developments.

Provide members of the school leadership team with professional development, networking opportunities, administrative release time and clerical support commensurate with additional responsibilities associated with the establishment and operation of School Community Councils.

Policy Directions for School Community Councils, 2005

4.3 School Community Council Development

School Community Councils, like Boards of Education and other governance entities, require ongoing orientation, training, development and networking opportunities. This will place a renewed demand on Boards of Education and their Administration to plan for and implement the necessary measures to provide for the development of School Community Councils within the School Division.

A long-term plan for Council development will be needed. And, again like administrative plans to provide Council support, such a plan should clarify the expectations of the Board of Education. A statement of the outcomes wanted described as clearly as is possible will help to provide the focus and sense of direction that Councils will need. The Division will need to consider first how it intends to engage Councils in development of the plan for their growth and development.

5.0 The Learning Improvement Plan

Chapter 5.0 of the Handbook is focused on development and recommendation of the Learning Improvement Plan. The elements of planning that are discussed include:

- Provision of information for planning;
- Development and recommendation of the Plan;
- Plan alignment and Board approval; and,
- Reporting on Plan outcomes.

With heightened provincial expectations in respect to planning and accountability, it will be necessary to coordinate planning at the Division and school level across the School Division. The process of development, recommendation and approval of Learning Improvement Plans at the school level is central to the needed coordination. Several of the basic considerations that will need to be addressed are discussed below.

5.1 Information for Planning

Learning Improvement Plans are expected to be informed by available data. Demographic information about the community, identification of student learning and well-being supports that might be provided, compilation of community-based supports for learning and ways to assist parents as they support their children's learning are types of information that the School Community Councils may gather and contribute to the planning process. This data is largely impersonal, factual and publicly available. There should be little concern or potential for conflict associated with gathering and using the data.

Other information may be more sensitive. Data about school and student achievement will become increasingly available and, without building capacity to interpret and reliably use such information, conflict can arise. How such information is reported and shared, how confidentiality is to be maintained, if and how the data is to be reported publicly, and how it is to be included in planning documents will need to be addressed by Boards and their Administration.

5.2 Plan Development and Recommendation

The process expectations for Learning Improvement Plan development are considered elsewhere in the *Handbook for School Community Councils and Principals*. However, of special significance to Administrators will be the training and development for school administrators, teachers and others who will be engaged at the school level. Such training will improve the quality of plans, ensure some degree of consistency among plans and more generally enhance the professional capacity of the School Division.

School Community Councils are expected to play a significant role in school-level planning and to recommend the Learning Improvement Plan to the Board for approval. A part of the development of staff capacity should address how they are expected to work with Councils and ensure their inclusion in and commitment to the Plan. The initiatives to be pursued by the Council should be included as a component of the school Learning Improvement Plan. In this way, their involvement will be integrated and aligned with the work of the school staff and others.

Contingency plans for situations where the staff and Council at a school are not cooperating or where the Council does not “recommend” the Learning Improvement Plan should be considered before they are needed. Usually, such difficulties have little to do with the initiative itself and much to do with interpersonal relations and misunderstandings about responsibilities. Every effort should be made to head off such disputes before they escalate to the point where individuals are in conflict. The training and development provided for staffs and Councils can go a long way toward avoidance of the problem.

5.3 Plan Alignment and Approval

Boards of Education will have approved the School Division Continuous Improvement Plan before School Community Councils become involved at the school level in development of the Learning Improvement Plan. In this way, the Board’s expectations for the form and content of Learning Improvement Plans will be set before Councils and school staffs begin development. Alignment will be achieved through the leadership Boards and Administrators provide.

Similarly, the process for recommendation and Board approval of Learning Improvement Plans will need to be set out and understood well before it is needed.

5.4 Reporting Outcomes to Parents and Community

School Community Councils are expected to report regularly on their activities to parents and the community. The school newsletter and website are commonly used to keep parents informed. Individuals and organizations that Councils may partner with could be kept informed by email. Informal communications will occur as Council members participate in other community activities and meet with other groups.

As well, Councils will prepare a more formal Annual Report. The same expectation is held for Boards of Education. Consideration should be given to how these reports might be coordinated and aligned. Which entity is to report on what outcomes and in what detail are key questions to explore.

In general, Councils should report on those matters that are their responsibility. Approvals of fees and for fundraising initiatives together with the purpose and amounts raised should be included in the Council's Annual Report. It is important to recognize that despite the Council's responsibility to report, the approvals and initiatives must fall within the limits of Board of Education governing policy or Administrative operational procedures so compliance may be a further matter on which to report.

As well, the Council's contribution to the Learning Improvement Plan or perhaps a special initiative the Council led in response to a Board of Education request for input should be reported. In general, the Council should take responsibility for and report on those matters for which it is responsible. The Board, Administration and Principal will report on their initiatives.

The process of reporting is a further matter for consideration. Waning interest in public meetings should be considered carefully as reporting plans are made. Growing use of the Internet for news and information may hold some promise for public access to accountability reports. And, other school events such as parent-teacher interviews and special student activity days that draw parents and community members may present good opportunities for School Community Councils to enlarge participation.

6.0 Approving Fundraising, Fees and the Student Code of Conduct

Chapter 6.0 of the Handbook addresses those matters to be approved or decided by School Community Councils. The focus is on the framework Board of Education governing policies and Administrative operational proceduresy will provide for the exercise of Council responsibility in these matters. The considerations discussed include:

- Limitations, constraints and latitude for Council decision-making;
- Board and Administration considerations;
- Record keeping and reporting; and,
- Student Code of Conduct approval.

6.1 Limitations and Constraints on Fundraising and Fees

The policies and operating procedures of the School Division provide the framework for School Community Council approval of fees and fundraising at the school level. The limitations, constraints and latitude that may be imposed should be clearly articulated. Similarly, expectations for record keeping, authority for dispersal of funds, safe keeping of funds, and for public reporting of approvals, funds generated and expenditures should be set out.

The Senior Administration may also wish to give consideration to standardized forms for approvals, record keeping and reporting. In this way the type of information to be recorded and kept is made clear. The integration of these procedures with Division-level accounting processes is the responsibility of the Senior Administration and schools and Councils should be expected to comply with those expectations.

The role that School Community Councils play in setting fees and approving fundraising initiatives is to provide a parent and community perspective that is sensitive to their socio-economic

circumstances. It is not Councils' responsibility to curb fundraising or to abolish school fees. Nor, on the other hand, is it an expectation that Councils will not be directly involved in fundraising initiatives. Many school support committees and groups are in place across the province and these raise substantial amounts of money in support of school-related activities. Boards of Education and School Community Councils should expect there to be strong feelings among parents, students and community members about the place of fees and fundraising within the school. If significant change in the range and amount of fees charged or funds raised is anticipated the policy and procedure implementation plan will need to be developed carefully. Several of the matters for deliberation related to fees and fundraising are discussed below.

One Saskatchewan Board of Education includes the following considerations in its policy on fundraising.

General Fundraising Principles¹

All school-based and parent association fundraising shall operate under the same guiding principles.

- a. All fundraising shall:
 - i. Operate under the approval and supervision of the principal.
 - ii. Operate in keeping with regulations of the City of Regina and applicable laws of the Province of Saskatchewan.
 - iii. Be accounted for in accordance with procedures established by the Business and Finance Department.
 - iv. Consider poverty sensitive principles and the support capacity of the community involved.
 - v. Operate with respect for the preservation of instructional time.
 - vi. Operate on a voluntary basis for pupils and families.
 - vii. Operate with consideration for the safety and security of pupils.
- b. Funds raised should complement and not replace public funding for education.
- c. Fundraising shall not be conducted for providing instruction, basic education items, or any items required for course completion.
- d. Pupils shall not be excluded from an event or program based on lack of involvement in fundraising initiatives.
- e. Fundraising objectives shall be developed in advance of the fundraising activity.
- f. Fundraising activities shall not require pupils to listen to or read commercial advertisements.

¹ Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division

In addition, a recent Saskatchewan School Boards Association research report¹ outlines five broad issues, related to school fees and fundraising that may be included in deliberations:

1. Monitoring: Who is keeping track of the monies collected through school fees and fundraising? Who is monitoring how much is collected or raised and how the money is being spent?
2. Transparency in Reporting: Are students and/or parents consistently made aware of what they are paying for, how much

they are paying and the reasons for payment, both in terms of time and money?

3. Barriers to Learning: Are costs and/or practices associated with school fees and fundraising creating a barrier to equitable learning opportunities for some students?
4. Educational Benefit: Are the school programs' learning objectives, beliefs and goals in harmony with fundraising practices or other activities requiring the collection of fees?
5. Governance: Do the Board of Education and the school recognize their responsibilities and their authority regarding accounting for costs associated with school fees and fundraising activities? How are the funds administered?

A significant additional question arises around the matter of "Board approval" for activities associated with schools. To ensure consistency across the School Division, the Board may limit fundraising to those activities that have been "Board approved". As well, further limitations may be placed on the type of fundraising initiative and amount to be raised.

It may also be advisable to establish certain limits on student fees such as for:

- General classroom consumables or supplies such as notebooks;
- Classroom activities such as fieldtrip transportation or skating fees;
- Curriculum project supplies such as wood, metal, or fabrics;
- Textbook caution;
- Student Representative Council (SRC); and
- Extra-curricular activities.

As a measure of guidance, a Saskatchewan Board of Education sets out in its policy the general principle that the School Division funds the educational program and expects a high degree of consistency of service delivery among the schools of the Division.

Fundraising and Fees¹

The Board develops its annual budget with the objective of providing funds sufficient to insure quality education and consistency of educational services to all students in the Saskatoon Public Schools.

¹ Saskatoon Board of Education

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Student Fees

Consider the difference between "mandatory fees" and "optional fees". Greater caution should be addressed to the number and amount of the former although optional fees can also restrict opportunities to participate.

¹ Fees, Fundraising and Fairness: A Guide for Schools. Research Report #03-06, April 2003.

All Boards of Education and their Administration will need to give consideration to their present policies on fees and fundraising and how they might best be revised to address School Community Council approvals.

6.2 Record Keeping

Keeping records is also important. For example:

- The Division may require written receipts to be given where that is practical. Where that is not, as in the case of a hotdog sale, a simple statement signed by at least two people describing how much total sales were for the event may satisfy the Division's needs. Those records would always have to be available;
- For disbursements, they should be done as much as is reasonable by cheque, with at least two signatures. In the case of cash, a receipt should be signed by the recipient and kept with the records of the activity;
- Any bank accounts should be set up with the knowledge of the Division office. Every bank account should require two signatures;
- Cash should be held in a secure location;
- Records should be able to describe the source of the funds and the use of the funds; and,
- The records should be in such a condition that a report can be provided whenever one is required by the Division or by an auditor. The Administration may prescribe a format that they require for reporting on fees and fundraising.

6.3 Approving the Student Code of Conduct

Student Codes of Conduct are generally developed and approved at the school level. Student and parent participation should be encouraged to improve understanding and compliance. The role of School Community Councils is to represent the interests of parents in this process; one that may be best fulfilled by ensuring broad parent involvement. The approval of the Council ensures that when staff seek to enforce the Code they know they have the support of the Council and parent body.

There may be less need for Division-level guidance in this responsibility unless there are Division-wide expectations for student conduct that must be enforced. In this case, it will be important for the Administration to make these expectations known.

7.0 Assessing Board of Education Progress

Chapter 7.0 of the Handbook looks at Board self-appraisal related to establishment and ongoing success of School Community Councils. It is expected that Boards and Administrators will integrate evaluation of progress on development of Councils with their ongoing plans for self-assessment and improvement. The items discussed include:

- Evaluation standards;
- Questions that might be asked; and
- System commitment to the support and engagement of Councils.

Evaluation of Board of Education and Senior Administration progress toward establishing and maintaining School Community Councils should be measured against how successful they have been in supporting the purpose of Councils “to develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth and to encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement”.

Processes to measure parent and community engagement and the extent to which “shared responsibility” is developed should be established. However, success in engaging parents and community must not overshadow the learning and well-being outcomes that are the goals of public education.

The Vision for School Community Councils also provides a useful framework for evaluation. Some questions that might be asked include:

- Are School Community Councils “integral, purposeful and valued”?
- Is Council composition “representative of the student composition of the school” they serve?
- Are the roles of Councils clear, well understood and fulfilled?

The willingness of Division and school staff to engage parents and community members in planning and decision-making and the care Boards of Education take in considering the advice of School

School Community Councils

Community Councils will send powerful signals about the value of parent and community engagement. These factors could also be addressed in any assessment of progress.

Boards of Education are encouraged to include evaluation of their efforts to support School Community Councils in their annual self-appraisal. In this way, constant attention will be given to improvement.

8.0 The Road Ahead

Establishing School Community Councils as an “integral, purposeful and valued” component of School Division governance is the responsibility of Boards of Education. A strong focus on student achievement and clear commitment to the importance and value of parent and community engagement in their children’s education are the ingredients necessary for success.

The road ahead holds great promise. School Community Councils provide a renewed opportunity to engage parents and community in public education. Shared responsibility for the learning and well-being of children and youth can be achieved by realizing the potential inherent in School Community Councils. Genuine involvement that values the contribution all members of the community can make to the work of schools will support and sustain engagement.

Boards of Education have their hands on the wheel that will guide the journey. The choices they make must be guided by their commitment to public engagement in public education. The invitation to parents and community members to partner more closely in the journey must be genuine, willingly extended and grounded in the knowledge that the home and school are “co-producers” of learning.

The Province too has a significant measure of responsibility. The support of the Province will be needed to maintain focus, to recognize new costs that are involved and perhaps most important to ensure that School Community Councils remain the centerpiece of school-level public engagement. The Province must celebrate the journey as well and be visible and strongly committed in its support.

Establishing School Community Councils is the first of a series of challenges in an unknown journey. Adjustments will be needed as Boards of Education, Senior Administrators and schools gain experience with Councils and come to understand better their potential for improvement of student learning and well-being. Boards of Education and Senior Administrators are encouraged to maintain a supporting hand and watchful eye on progress toward achievement of the potential in the role and purposes of Councils. Care, commitment and oversight are needed to ensure the successful completion of the journey.

Appendices

1.0 Election Materials Templates

1.1 Public Notice

Getting Involved in Public Schools

How to Get Involved...

School Community Councils are being elected at each school in the Division. Councils will replace District Boards of Trustees and Local School Advisory Committees.

The purpose of School Community Councils is to:

- Support student learning success and well-being; and,
- Encourage parent and community involvement in the school.

Councils are accountable to their community. Their responsibilities are to:

- Understand their community;
- Support parent and community involvement in the school;
- Advise the Board and school;
- Work with the School to develop and recommend a Learning Improvement Plan to the Board;
- Help parents to support their children’s learning; and
- Approve fees and fundraising in the school.

Parents and Community members are encouraged to participate in School Community Councils elections and become involved in their school.

Who’s Involved...

Parents of students attending the school and School Division electors who live in the school attendance area may be nominated as a Representative Member of their Council and vote in the elections. First Nations students who live on-reserve but attend the school will be represented by Parents and Community members from their reserve.

The Principal and a teacher will also be named to the Council.

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Public Election Notice:

- *Description of Council purpose and role;*
 - *Annual Meeting and Elections date, time and contact for each school;*
 - *Qualifications of Candidates and Voters; and*
 - *How to obtain more information.*
-

When to Get Involved...

School Community Council elections are scheduled for the week of May 15, 2006.

Election dates and contact persons...

<i>School</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Election Supervisor</i>	<i>Phone</i>
A	Monday May 15 7:30 p.m.	One	555-1212
B	Monday May 15 8:00 p.m.	Two	555-3434
C	Tuesday May 16 8:00 p.m.	Three	555-5656
D	Thursday May 17 7:00 p.m.	Four	555-7878

To Learn More About Getting Involved...

Call 1-800-555-9090

Email schooldivision@provider.ca

1.2 Nomination Form

***School Community Council
Nomination Form***

Nominee: _____ School: _____

Contact Information:

I am standing for election as (Check One):

A Parent: A Community Member:

Student Component I am seeking to Represent:

Supporting Parent or Community Member:

Name: _____
Signature

1.3 Ballot

<i>School Community Council Election Ballot</i>	
Metis Student Component Representative	
Vote for Two:	
Candidate A (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate B (Community)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate C (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
New Canadian Student Component Representative	
Vote for One:	
Candidate A (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate B (Community)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Representative Members	
Vote for Four:	
Candidate A (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate B (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate C (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate D (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate E (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Candidate F (Parent)	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.0 Legislation

Selected sections, related to School Community Councils, of Bill No. 59, an Act to amend *The Education Act, 1995* and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as of first reading, April 12, 2006.

- **Sections 135 to 140 repealed**

17 Sections 135 to 140 are repealed

- **New Division re school community councils**

18 The following Division is added before Part IV:

“SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCILS

- **“Establishment of school community councils**

140.1 (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), every board of education shall establish a school community council for each school in its division.

(2) Two or more school community councils in the same school division may petition the board of education of their school division to recommend to the minister that those school community councils be amalgamated to form one school community council.

(3) If the minister receives a recommendation from a board of education to amalgamate school community councils, the minister may approve the amalgamation if, in the minister’s opinion, it is in the best interests of education in Saskatchewan.

(4) If the minister receives a recommendation from a board of education to separate an amalgamated school community council and establish two or more school community councils, the minister may approve the separation and establishment if, in the minister’s opinion, it is in the best interests of education in Saskatchewan.

- **“Membership of school community council**

140.2 Subject to the regulations and the policies of its board of education, every school community council shall consist of:

(a) no fewer than five and no more than nine elected members to represent parents of pupils and community members; and

(b) appointed members.

- **“Terms of office**

140.3 (1) Subject to subsection (2), each elected member of a school community council holds office for two years and is eligible for re-election.

(2) In the first election for each school community council, approximately half of the members are to be elected to one-year terms and the other members are to be elected to two-year terms.

(3) If there is a vacancy in an elected member's position, a board of education may appoint an individual to that position.

- **“Disqualification of members**

140.4 A school community council member shall vacate his or her office as a member of the school community council if the member:

(a) is convicted of an indictable offence;

(b) is absent from three or more consecutive meetings of the school community council without the authorization of the school community council; or

(c) ceases to be eligible for election as a member pursuant to the regulations or the policies of the school community council's board of education.

- **“Duties and powers**

140.5 Every school community council shall:

(a) facilitate parent and community participation in school planning;

(b) provide advice to its board of education;

(c) provide advice to its school's staff;

(d) provide advice to other agencies involved in the learning and development of pupils; and

(e) comply with the regulations and the policies of its board of education”.

- **Section 176 amended**

19 Subsection 176(1) is amended:

(a) by adding “or (3)” after “subsection (2)”; and

(b) by striking out “basic”.

- **Section 177 amended**

20 Section 177 is amended by striking out “Subject to the regulations, the” and substituting “The”.

- **Section 182 amended**

21(1) Subsection 182(1) is repealed and the following substituted:

“(1) Religious instruction, as authorized by the board of education of a school division with respect to any of the schools in its jurisdiction, may be given in that school division for a period not exceeding two and one-half hours per week”.

(2) Subsection 182(3) is amended by striking out “a board of trustees, or the board of education in the case of a school division that is not divided into districts,” **and substituting** “the board of education”.

Access the French version of these amendments at

<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/EducationalIssues/SchoolCommunityCouncils/EducationActFrench.pdf>

3.0 Implementation Timeline

Following is the Department of Learning timeframe for implementation of School Community Councils:

School Year 2005-06

Support tools for Boards of Education, School Community Councils, school division administrators, and school leadership teams will be developed in collaboration with education partners.

Discussions will be undertaken with education stakeholders to discuss the policy directions, legislation and regulations, transition and implementation plans.

District (local) Boards of Trustees in rural areas will continue to exist after December 31, 2005 for the short term, until The Education Act, 1995 is amended to provide for the establishment of School Community Councils. The amending legislation would then also repeal the current provisions of the Act that provide for District Boards.

Amendments will be sought to The Education Act, 1995 to:

- remove reference to District Boards of Trustees and Local School Advisory Councils;
- reflect Board responsibilities in relation to the School Community Councils; and,
- establish School Community Councils as purposeful, integral components of school division governance.

Regulations will be developed outlining specific parameters related to the purpose, formation, composition, responsibilities and accountability of the new School Community Councils.

Within the context of the Foundation Operating Grant Review, Foundation Operating Grant support for School Community Councils will be announced.

In consultation with school communities, Boards will develop policy to support implementation and define the composition of their School Community Councils by the end of June 2006.

School Year 2006-07

School Community Councils will be elected by the end of the 2006-07 school year. (This may proceed sooner in many areas.)

Orientation and inservice for all School Community Councils will occur by the end of the 2006-07 school year.

School Year 2007-08

All School Community Councils will be operational during the 2007-08 school year.

School Community Councils will develop their Code of Conduct and Constitution, and recommend permanent advisory positions for approval by the Board of Education.

Boards will engage School Community Councils in development of the School Division Continuous Improvement Plan.

School Community Councils will establish a process for engaging parents and community members in the development of the Learning Improvement Plan.

School Year 2009-10

Saskatchewan Learning will undertake an evaluation process related to the implementation of School Community Councils. Recommendations will inform future development of legislation, regulations and guidelines for their operations. A report of the findings and an action plan will be provided to all schools and school divisions.

References

Saskatchewan Education. 1988.

Partners at School: A Handbook on How to Involve Indian and Metis Parents in School Activities.

Saskatchewan Learning. 2005. *Final Report of the Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel.*

Saskatchewan Learning. 2005. *Policy Directions for School Community Councils.*

Other Resources

Resources developed by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association are represented by the symbol 

 **Website for School Community Councils** – Resources and background information for School Community Councils. Includes the School Community Council handbooks.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/EducationalIssues/SchoolCommunityCouncils/SchoolCommunityCouncils.htm>

 **Public Engagement – Module 15** – Engaging the school board, school staff, students and members of the school community to dialogue to work together for better schools.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module15.pdf>

 **Building the Parent School Partnership** – A collection of web articles, resources and ideas for building a successful parent-school partnership.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/EducationalIssues/ParentSchoolPartnership/ParentSchoolPartnership.htm>

 **The Way Things Work: An Orientation – Module 1** – Insight into the organizational structure of Saskatchewan’s Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module1.pdf>

 **Vision, Mission and Planning – Module 3** – Understanding the importance of vision, mission and planning in your school division
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module3.pdf>

 **Education Finance: Getting and Spending – Module 4** – Understanding revenues and expenditures and the importance of aligning a budget with organizational values
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module4.pdf>

 **School Program and Student Achievement – Module 7** – Understanding the role of the board of education in program decisions
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module7.pdf>

 **Successful Schools: Guidelines for Boards of Education – Module 9** – What makes a successful school and how parent-school-community partnerships can help
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module9.pdf>

 **Diversity in Education – Module 10** – Understanding diversity and the importance of meeting students needs in schools.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module10.pdf>

 **Becoming a Better Board Chair – Module 12** – How to become an effective Captain, Organizer, Policy Leader and Spokesperson in your role as Chair.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module12.pdf>

 **Effective Public Speaking – Module 13** – Improving your public speaking skills
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module13.pdf>

 **Effective Communications and Public Relations – Module 14** – Creating positive images through effective communications and public relations skills.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module14.pdf>

 **Risk Management – Module 17** – Understanding the boards role in managing school and school division safety risks
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/TrusteeEducationAndBoardDevelopment/LearningModules/Module17.pdf>

Partners at School – A Handbook on How to Involve Indian and Metis Parents in School Activities. This handbook was published by Saskatchewan Learning in collaboration with Saskatchewan School Boards Association and the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation.
<http://www.saskschoolboards.ca/EducationServices/ResearchAndDevelopment/ResearchReports/IndianAndMetisEducation/1987s.pdf>