



Living Sky
School Division No. 202

School Community Council Handbook

Your participation will make a difference!

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Welcome to your School Community Council

As a school community council member, you can help your council discover new and exciting ways to contribute to the education of students in your school. You can also represent the view of others in the community and encourage their participation in the school.

Education is a partnership involving parents, students, teachers, principals, school boards and the community. Your involvement in the council gives you the opportunity to strengthen that partnership, and to be part of a dedicated team working to ensure a high quality education for the students of the Living Sky School Division. When the entire school community works together to support learning, children tend to succeed, not just in school but throughout their lives.

Membership on a School Community Council also benefits the individuals involved. The personal advantages of becoming a School Community Council member include:

- * Being an important partner in the education system
- * Contributing to the shared goal of improving student achievement
- * Having a vehicle through which to express opinions
- * Being informed about what is happening at the school

Use this handbook as a resource. In it you will find information, ideas and activities that you may select and adapt to meet your needs and those of your School Community Council.

What is a School Community Council?

Much like a Parent Association or a Home and School Association, a School Community Council (SCC) is a committee of parents/guardians working together for the benefit of students and the school community. Unlike a Parent Association, SCC's include representatives from a much wider group of people in the school community.

Such as:

- ✓ Parents and guardians of students attending the school and School Division electors who live in the school attendance area and are interested in improving education may stand for election to their School Community Council and vote in the elections. (5-9 elected positions)
- ✓ In schools where First Nations students living on-reserve attend school, the Indian Band will be represented on the Council. (representative)
- ✓ In high schools, students will be members of the Council. (1-2 elected positions)
- ✓ The school Principal and a Teacher will be named to the Council. (appointed)

SCCs build on the success of existing parent associations, but take involvement several steps further by encouraging active involvement of community members who previously did not have a voice in activities of their local schools. In addition to helping to encourage community involvement in school activities and projects, SCCs will also work with their school's staff on the Learning Improvement Plan.

Learning Improvement Planning is a process through which schools set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when these goals will be achieved. The ultimate goal is to improve student achievement by enhancing the way curriculum is delivered, creating a positive environment for learning, and increasing parent engagement in their children's learning at school and in the home.

The Guiding Principles of School Community Councils

Representative

School Community Councils are an integral component of School Division governance. They strive through their membership and their actions to be representative of all students attending the school

Inclusive

School Community Councils recognize all members of the school community can make a difference in the learning success and well-being of children and youth. In their activities, School Community Councils engage in processes to ensure all voices in the school community are heard and all perspectives are taken into account.

Respectful

School Community Councils understand school communities are complex environments. Councils recognize the importance of both lay and professional perspectives within the community and strive to appreciate all viewpoints.

Trustworthy

School Community Councils conduct their affairs in an open and transparent manner. Councils honour the right to privacy of individuals and treat all information they are privy to with appropriate discretion and sensitivity.

Responsible

School Community Councils make every effort to respond to the needs and aspirations of the school community they represent. They regularly consult with students, parent, community members, the Board of Education, the school Principal, school staff and others. In addition to this, Councils respond to request for guidance and direction, by the Board of Education, school Principal and other community agencies and organizations that support children and youth.

Effective

School Community Councils focus their attention and efforts on key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being. Keeping in mind their understandings related to their own unique school communities, Councils align their work with provincial and School Division goals and initiatives related to student learning and well-being outcomes.

Committed

School Community Councils are committed to fulfilling their role as a vital link in school level governance. Councils evaluate their performance regularly, take advantage of opportunities to build their capacity and account to the public they represent and the Board of Education on their progress.

The Purpose and Vision of School Community Councils

Purpose

School Community Councils will help to strengthen the capacity of schools to improve children's learning. By helping families to support their children's learning and by gathering the resources of the community to ensure student well being SCCs will make a valued contribution to the learning of Living Sky's students.

The purpose of the School Community Council is to:

- ✓ Develop shared responsibility for the learning success and well-being of all children and youth; and,
- ✓ Encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement in school planning and improvement processes.

Vision

1. The School Community Council must be an integral, purposeful and valued component of school division governance.
The School Community Council is:
 - Created through an election process
 - Integrated into the Board of Education decision-making process
 - Guided by common standards included in legislation.
2. The School Community Council must be inclusive of the community and representative of the students in the school.
The School Community Councils:
 - Membership is representative of students in the school
3. The School Community Council roles are clear and well understood.
The School Community Council:
 - Develops shared responsibility for learning success and well-being of children and youth
 - Encourages and facilitates parent and community engagement in school planning and improvement processes
 - Provides guidance and direction from a lay perspective to the school, the Board and community organizations and agencies
4. The School Community Council responsibilities address key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being.
The School Community Council:
 - Focuses its attention on the areas of the School Improvement Plan where the parent/community perspective and efforts are most appropriate and needed

- Monitors its activities to support continuous improvement in the areas of student learning and well-being
5. The School Community Council aligns its work with provincial and division goals and initiatives.
- The School Community Council:
- Aligns its work with the Provincial overarching accountability framework and focuses on related Division goals and initiatives
 - Aligns its work with Provincial and Division learning and well-being outcomes for students
6. The School Community Council is accountable, transparent and responsive in its relationship with parents and the school community.
- The School Community Council:
- Actively engages parents and community members in matters of concern related to public education
 - Reflects the nature of the community in which it is situated by collecting and sharing appropriate information with others
 - Regularly reports on its activities to parents, the school, and the community

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Community Council

Your School Community Council is an advisory body of volunteers who work together to provide ideas and opinions to help the Principal and Board of Education make the school a better place for learning. Your council should represent the diversity of the school community, which includes the parents and guardians of the pupils enrolled in the school and other people who live in the school's attendance area. It should give your community opportunities to discuss educational issues and respond to the local educational needs by providing information for parents and community members, getting feedback from them, and presenting their views to the school and the Board of Education. It should help your school identify and respond to the educational needs of your community.

School Community Councils are established to:

- ◆ Undertake activities to enhance its understanding of the community's economic, social and health needs, aspirations for pupils' learning and well-being, and resources and supports for the school, parents, guardians and community
- ◆ In co-operation with the school staff, develop and recommend to its board of education for approval a learning improvement plan that is in accordance with the school division's strategic plan
- ◆ Perform any activities assigned to it in a School Improvement Plan approved by the board of education

- ◆ Communicate annually to parents, guardians and community members about its plans, initiatives and accomplishments
- ◆ Account publicly for the expenditure of funds related to the operation of the school community council
- ◆ Participate in orientation, training, development and networking opportunities in order to enhance its capacity to fulfil its responsibilities
- ◆ Not discuss or disclose personal confidential information about or complaints about any pupil, family member or guardian of any pupil, teacher, administrator or other employee of or member of the board of education
- ◆ Facilitate continuing communications and promote mutual understanding between the school and the community.
- ◆ Share responsibility for the learning success of all pupils
- ◆ Encourage and facilitate parent and community engagement in school planning and improvement processes.
- ◆ Provide an ongoing organization that will help listen to and communicate the opinions, concerns and proposals of the community members and parents/guardians as well as ensuring these concerns and proposals are brought to the attention of the Board of Education.

The School Community Councils that are the most effective have the following:*

- A focus on student learning
- A link to the school's priorities for growth and improvement
- An emphasis on promoting meaningful parental and community involvement
- The collaborative leadership of the school principal
- Good processes for decision making
- A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Training for the school Principal
- Training for the SCC members
- Effective strategies for achieving a wide range of involvement from the entire school community
- Knowledge of ways to effect change

A Successful School Community Council:*

- Actively seeks the views of its school community
- Represents the views of its school community
- Informs its school community about its role and functions, projects it is undertaking, and decisions it has made as well as the reasons behind them
- Involves its diverse school community
- Encourages all forms of parental involvement and support
- Creates a forum to increase communication among partners
- Works within the policies of the school board
- Becomes well informed about school and board policies and procedures
- Holds sessions on team building, consensus building, etc
- Focuses on the best interests of all students
- Supports school improvement initiatives
- Maintains high ethical standards

*Adapted from Anthony Bryk, John Easton, David Kerbow, Sharon Rollow and Penny Sebring, Report of the Steering Committee Consortium on Chicago School Reform (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, July 1993)

School Community Council Duties

An SCC's duties are detailed in The Education Act. In summary these duties include:

- ◆ Undertake activities to enhance the understanding of the community's economic, social and health needs, aspirations for pupils' learning and well-being, and resources and supports for the school, parents, guardians and community.
- ◆ Encourage and promote parent and community participation in school planning including:
 - Working with school staff to develop and support the Learning Improvement Plan that is in accordance with the school division's strategic plan
 - Complete any work defined by the approved Learning Improvement Plan
 - Engage in regular and annual communications to parents/guardians and community members about plans, initiatives and successes
- ◆ Develop, participate in and administer any school programs that previous parent councils may have organized, such as hot lunch programs
- ◆ Take part in any available orientation, training or development that supports the goals of the SCC and helps to enhance your capacity to fulfill the SCC's responsibilities.

- ◆ Provide advice and feedback to the Board, school staff and any agency involved in the development of students
- ◆ Never discuss publicly or have access to any personal and/or confidential information relating to the Living Sky School Division student, staff, administration, Board or family
- ◆ Establish and maintain a Board approved constitution
- ◆ Be publicly accountable for the use of all funds related to the operation of the SCC.

School Community Council Activities

In executing their duties, typical SCC activities may include:

- ◆ Planning special events and information sessions at their school
- ◆ Recruiting and organizing school volunteers
- ◆ Discussing education-related and school-specific issues both for the current year and for the future of the school and the school division
- ◆ Fund raising activities
- ◆ Identifying SCC representatives to attend and participate in division-wide activities/information sessions and research projects
- ◆ Recruiting parents and other subject experts to make presentations of interest and educational value to the school community
- ◆ Creating opportunities for parents/guardians and community members to become involved in the activities and life of the school
- ◆ Making recommendations to the Board on subjects relating to school facilities

Here are some examples of what the School Community Councils in the Living Sky School Division are doing:

- ◆ Provide Child Development Yardsticks to Parents
- ◆ Support Career Education
- ◆ “Whole Child” Program
- ◆ Support for Student Physical Activities
- ◆ Host Parent Night
- ◆ Support Technology for Student Learning
- ◆ Staff Appreciation Activities
- ◆ Support Literacy Initiatives
- ◆ Playground Development

Board Responsibilities

The Board can help councils develop strong relationships with others by providing clear expectations, practical support and guidance. By establishing avenues for communication and responding in a clear and timely fashion to SCC requests, Boards can help create a positive working relationship. Boards are also responsible for providing ongoing orientation, training, development and networking for School Community Councils. This includes providing members of the school leadership team with professional development and networking opportunities as they work on the establishment and operation of School Community Councils. It is also the responsibility of the Board to designate a School Division contact with the Senior Administration. This senior administrative contact will help ensure the successful implementation and operation of the SCC and will be a valuable source of advice, support and communication assistance.

Principal and Teacher Responsibilities

School Principals and Teachers play a vital role in the establishment and ongoing success of the School Community Council. By demonstrating through their interactions with other staff, students, parents, and others that they believe in and support the development of an open and inviting school climate, Principals and Teachers are positive role models. SCCs may also look to Principals and Teachers to identify issues on problems and to provide information to support SCC decision making.

The Principal and Teacher members have all of the same duties as elected members. However, being appointed members, they should not serve as chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer or secretary. (This point is not the same for appointed students or appointed First Nations Representation in the SCC. These students, and First Nations Representatives, although appointed, may serve as chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer or secretary).

Operations

Each School Community Council must meet at least 5 times in each school year and hold an Annual Meeting. Most SCC will find that they should meet once a month during the school year in order to conduct their business and fill their role effectively.

Please note that minutes of each School Community Council meeting will be kept and a copy of the minutes should be forwarded to the School Division Office. Please send all SCC minutes to reception@lskysd.ca.

How to Hold an Effective Meeting

Simple Rules for Chairing a Meeting:

- ♦ The Chairperson calls the meeting to order
- ♦ The meeting's formality depends on the Chairperson, the group's size and the group's preference
- ♦ The Chairperson recognizes Members before they speak
- ♦ Each item is entitled to full and free debate by individual Members – one at a time
- ♦ Each person desiring to speak should be allowed to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time
- ♦ The Chairperson is responsible for moving the meeting along and ensuring no one monopolizes the floor
- ♦ Only one subject may be discussed at a time
- ♦ If time does not permit full discussion of an item, a motion may be made to table the item for discussion at another meeting
- ♦ Every member has equal rights

Adapted from Alberta Home and School Councils' Association. 1995
School Council Resource Manual, Edmonton

A meeting has been effective when all participants feel that:

- ♦ The meeting had a purpose
- ♦ They have a sense of accomplishment
- ♦ They contributed to the discussion
- ♦ They were valued by others
- ♦ Creative ideas, alternatives, or solutions were generated
- ♦ They were able to share different points of view
- ♦ They are committed to the decisions made and actions taken
- ♦ They are willing to work together again

Meeting Checklist

- ✓ Meeting Date:
- ✓ Start Time:
- ✓ End Time:
- ✓ Participants: Number expected

- ✓ Sign in sheet with meetings, date and location indicated
- ✓ Name tags and holders
- ✓ Name cards for Council Members
- ✓ Facilities: Size of room is appropriate
- ✓ Seating arrangement: Fits agenda and encourages open discussions
- ✓ Tables for participants to write on
- ✓ Refreshments: Tea, coffee, juice
- ✓ Equipment: Projector/computer access
- ✓ Transparencies
- ✓ Extension cord

Annual General Meeting and Elections

School Community Council Elections must be held at the same time as the SCC's Annual General Meeting. The AGM and Elections must be held before the end of October of every year. It is advised that the **AGM date be set by the end of May** of each year and the date be sent to reception@lskysd.ca. The School Community Council AGM and Elections must be publicly noted at least 4 weeks in advance.

Communication

Between School Community Councils and Senior Administrative Staff

The Director of Education or designate will facilitate the Board/SCC Forum, plan and implement division-wide development opportunities for members of School Community Councils, and ensure that a Returning Officer is appointed for each SCC.

The Director of Education or designate will implement a systematic plan of leadership in-service to assist School Community Councils as required.

Superintendents will provide a means of communication with Senior Administrative staff and may attend SCC meetings to share or gather information related to the school, school division, or progress with Board of Education Strategic Plan and Continuous Improvement Framework goals.

If an individual SCC wishes to meet with a Superintendent of Learning, the school principal will invite the Superintendent responsible for that school to become involved.

Between School Community Councils and the Board of Education

The Director of Education or designate will develop a model for SCCs to communicate with the Board of Education on an annual basis.

In order to facilitate communication with the Board, the following will occur:

- ◆ The names of the Board members will be forwarded to every School Community Council in the Division
- ◆ The Director of Education or designate will plan and facilitate a Board/SCC Forum. The Forum will be hosted Regionally in the School Division annually with the following purpose:
 - Share information related to goals and priorities
 - Share information related to the Board of Education Strategic Plan and Continuous Improvement Framework outcomes
 - Dialogue related to matters of interest
- ◆ The Director of Education or designate will inform the School Community Council that individual Board members would be pleased to attend SCC meetings. When a SCC desires a Board member to attend a meeting, the request is to be made to the Director of Education or Board Chair.

The delegation process at regular or special Board meetings provides opportunities for individuals or groups to address the Board and for the Board to receive items of interest from its constituents.

Between the School, Home and Community

Principals are to encourage staff to be aware of the need to be receptive to parents/guardians who wish to influence decision-making at the school. Principals shall initiate activities at the school level designed to promote communication between the school and the home and the school and the community. Some methods the principal may use to promote communication are:

- ◆ Adult volunteers
- ◆ School newsletters
- ◆ Teacher notes
- ◆ Parent/guardian – teacher conferences
- ◆ School visitations
- ◆ School displays
- ◆ School handbooks
- ◆ Open houses at the school
- ◆ Local newspaper
- ◆ Radio, Television or the Internet
- ◆ Posters

Mission / Vision / Values

The mission statement defines the purpose of the school division. The mission statement for Living Sky School Division No. 202 is: ***Shaping Our Future Through Thoughtful Schools.***

The vision of our school division is:
“Growth Without Limits, Learning For All”

Living Sky School Division adheres to the following values:

- Care
- Integrity
- Trust
- Honesty
- Mutual Respect
- Courage
- Commitment
- Inclusion
- Innovation
- Transparency

We believe:

1. Student learning is priority number one.
2. Students learn and staff work best in caring, respectful environments.
3. In relevant, responsive, results oriented curriculum
4. Collaborative, authentic partnerships build strength.
5. Our organization is accountable to students, parents, community.
6. In prevention and early intervention.
7. Our organization strengthens through shared leadership.