



**PRAIRIE SPIRIT
SCHOOL DIVISION**

PURSUING STUDENT SUCCESS

a guide for

**School
Community
Councils**

School Community Councils 101

Prairie Spirit School Division would like to extend a warm welcome to new School Community Council (SCC) members in all of our schools. SCCs are an integral part of the school system and are a primary link between the home, community and school. We believe you will find your involvement with the SCC to be a rewarding and meaningful contribution to your local school.

Your work with your SCC is important to both your students and your entire school. Research shows that students have greater success when parents are involved and engaged at the school level supporting their child’s learning.

**The focus of the
School
Community
Council is
student learning
and
well-being.**

Purpose of the SCC

The purpose of the School Community Council is to:

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

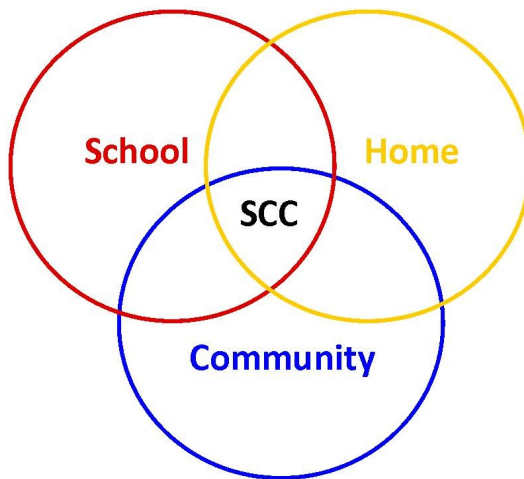
School Community Councils are ideally situated to support parents and families in becoming directly involved in their children’s learning. As part of the school system, Councils provide students, parents, family and community members with an opportunity to actively participate in planning and governance.

What are some needs in our community regarding parental involvement in the education of their children?

SCC responsibilities

An SCC is accountable to its community. The responsibilities of the Council include:

- **Understanding** their community;
- **Supporting** parent and community involvement in the school;
- **Advising** the Board and school as outlined in the Board of Education School Community Council Policy;
- **Working** with the School to develop, support and provide advice to the School Plan for Improved Student Learning (SPISL);
- **Helping** parents find ways to support their child’s learning;
- **Reviewing** extra-curricular school activities approved by the principal and Student Council members;
- **Providing** advice regarding fundraising activities in the school; and
- **Reviewing** student fees to ensure alignment with Board of Education directions.



How would I describe our community?

Council member responsibilities

Your role as a Council member is to build shared responsibility among parents, the community and school for student learning and well-being. In addition, your role is to lead parent and community involvement in school planning and improvement.

As a Council member, you will attend meetings from September to June as determined by the Council calendar and engage in the work of the Council such as:

- **Supporting and advising** the development of the Learning Improvement Plan with the staff of the school;
- **Developing, leading and taking action** on Council initiatives to help families support their children's learning;
- **Providing advice** to the school, Board of Education and other community organizations and agencies, as outlined in Board of Education policy;
- **Providing advice** for school fundraising activities, school fees and the student code of conduct;
- **Reporting** to parents and community on Council progress; and,
- **Working** with other Council members to learn more about the role of the Council and how to fulfill its responsibilities.

School Plan for Improved Student Learning (SPISL)

Each school is required to formulate a learning improvement plan for its students for the school year. The goals and vision in this plan are related to the Division's overall goals and are tailored for the individual school. In addition to setting tangible goals, each school is asked to provide evaluation mechanisms to determine if the goals were met.

The School Community Council works with the school staff to ensure learning goals are supported and accomplished. The SCC is asked to articulate how it will support the achievement of the school's goals. The SCC will become very familiar with the SPISL in its school. A template of a school's SPISL follows this page.

"The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. . . When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to:

- ***do better in school***
- ***stay in school longer and***
- ***like school more."***

Henderson, A.T., & Mapp, K.L. 2002. *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.*

An SCC supports parent and community involvement in the school.

What are some learning needs in our school?

How do I see myself contributing as part of the SCC?

School Community Council Meetings

Action-Oriented

School Community Councils are guided by well-developed meeting agendas. Decisions are made and plans of action developed and implemented. Actions provide evidence to Council Members, parents and community members that Council meetings are fulfilling their mandate.

Effective

There are five signs of an effective meeting:

1. The meeting has a purpose and an agenda. People know why they're there and what they're hoping to accomplish.
2. Members participate actively and the meetings are democratic. All participants feel they have the chance to be heard.
3. The members generate creative ideas and solutions.
4. Members are committed to the decisions and actions they reach.
5. Members are willing to work together again. It's important to feel positive about the meeting and maintain mutual respect.

Reporting to Parents and the Community

The strength of the SCC connection between home, school and community depends heavily upon the Council's communications or your "reporting" practices. In your School Community Council's activities, Council Members and Council as a whole will want to consider how they will speak and listen to parents and community. At every meeting and in every decision Councils must ask themselves, "How will student learning or well-being be improved by the decision we make?" You may also ask yourselves:

- Do we understand the interests of parents and community members in the issue before us?
- What do parents and community members need to know about this decision?

Annual General Meeting and Elections

Prairie Spirit School Division holds elections each Spring typically during the last week of April. Each School Community Council elects approximately one-half of the representatives for a two-year term. School community councils meet at least five times each year, and have an annual general meeting, during which time elections are held. Often the School Community Council reports on its progress at the annual general meeting.

Action-oriented meetings guide School Community Council Activities.

Notes

How can our SCC communicate with our community?



School Community Council Finances

SCC Funding and Expenditures

The Board of Education provides each School Community Council with an annual grant which provides operational funds for the SCC. The local SCC must establish an annual budget for these funds. These funds are to be used to promote the work of the SCC and its operation in each school. Prairie Spirit’s guidelines for the use of these funds follow the expectations set out by the Ministry of Education.

For example, the funds can be used to cover postage, paper, photocopying, posters or SCC newsletters. The annual grant funds can be used to pay for refreshments for SCC meetings or to pay for a guest speaker who could speak to parents and the community on a topic relevant to the school’s goals. The funds are not to be used for fundraising activities for the school.

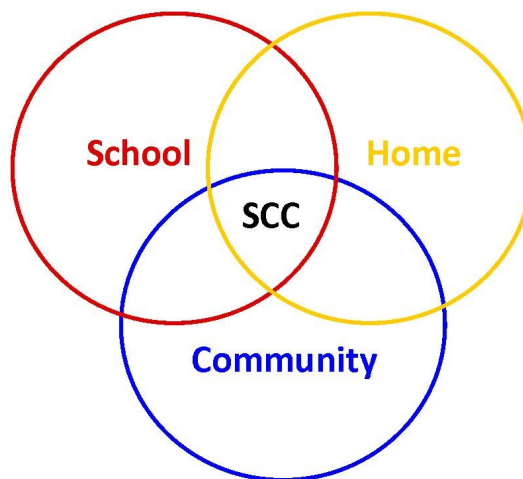
Prairie Spirit School Division’s policy regarding the SCC grants states:

2. *Purpose of Funds*
 - a. *Vehicle expense allowance for out-of-community events and meetings. Per diem is not included.*
 - b. *Communication and public relations*
 - c. *Memberships in provincial organizations*
 - d. *Conference attendance and professional development*
 - e. *Incidental expenses such as postage and printing.*

Should School Community Councils Fundraise?

Raising funds to enhance the learning environment for students may be performed by both school councils and fundraising committees. Fundraising is not an expected activity of school councils, whose main role is advisory. Many feel that fundraising limits the ability of a school council to operate effectively because it splits the focus and divides energies. The school council, as a whole, must decide the extent to which its purpose is likely to be enhanced or compromised as a result of fundraising efforts.

Members who serve on a school community council can also serve on a fundraising society, and vice versa, unless the constitution of either organization prohibits it.



**The local SCC
creates a
budget for its
annual grant.**

Notes

The work of the SCC

Advising the School, Board of Education and Others

School Community Councils will be asked to share their understandings by providing advice to the Board of Education, the school and other community organizations and agencies and governments on various matters.

The advice the Board of Education may seek falls into three broad categories:

- advice related to general Division-wide governing policy, operational procedure and decisions including the School Division *Strategic Plan*, budget and other specific initiatives;
- advice on the educational program and its delivery and on religious observances and language of instruction within the school: and,
- advice about the formation, structure and operations of the Council itself.

The Principal may request Council's advice on extra-curricular programs, the family-life curriculum, supports and enhancements for the learning program and e-learning opportunities.

A Regional Health District may seek a Council's input on wellness initiatives for children and youth. Community Recreation Boards and Library Boards may request advice regarding recreation and family literacy programs.

In all cases, the advice provided by the School Community Council is expected to be provided at a general and school-wide level and the interests of all students must be taken into consideration. Care must be taken to ensure that a program or special initiative to support certain students does not detract from the opportunities provided for other students.

Sometimes parents or community members may ask a Council to investigate a particular incident or to advocate on their behalf for special interests. This is not the role of Councils and the Members should be careful to avoid making commitments to others before the full Council has considered the matter or if the issue lies outside the role and responsibilities of School Community Councils. Rather, parents or community members who have a concern or problem should be encouraged to address their concern to the appropriate individual and to follow the proper channels of communication.

An important role that Councils can play is to help others understand what those channels are and how they are intended to work. It is also important to understand that some information and especially that about individual students and staff is not available to Councils.

The interests of all students must be taken into consideration when the SCC gives advice.

Notes

School student and staff records contain sensitive and confidential information that is not intended to be shared with any individual or group for purposes other than those for which it was collected and then only with individuals, usually professionals, who require it to fulfill their obligations to students, staff or the Board of Education.

A school community council shall 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.

Advocacy and lobbying should never be confused with advice giving. Self appointed lobbyists are rarely asked for their advice. Elected and representative School Community Councils are asked!

The focus of the School Community Council is student learning and well-being.

Tips for involving hard to reach parents and community members

- Collaborate with other agencies that work with parents and community members of the population sector your Council wants involved.
- Involve grandparents and extended family members, encourage parents to bring a relative or friend to a Council meeting.
- Hold events outside the school building in accessible, nonthreatening locations.
- Identify key community leaders and invite them to assist in communicating with parents and others.
- Provide translators for non-English speaking parents and community members at meetings.
- Serve refreshments at events.
- Invite elders and resource people to the school and hold cultural events.
- Work with the school and community to organize community council activities and events after hours.
- Provide a room in the school for parents and community members to get together.
- Deliver School Community Council newsletters to the home.

Notes



SCC Guiding Principles

Representative

SCCs 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.

Respectful

SCCs recognize the importance of both lay and professional perspectives within the community and strive to appreciate all viewpoints.

Trustworthy

SCCs 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

The SCC makes every effort to respond to the needs and aspirations of the school community they represent. They regularly consult with students, parents, community members, the Board of Education, the school, Principal, school staff and others.

Effective

School Community Councils focus their attention and efforts on key matters that make a difference in student learning and well-being.

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 SCC responds to the needs and aspirations of the school community it represents.

Notes

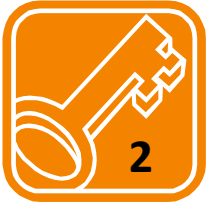


Keys to Successful Partnerships: Six Types of Involvement



Parenting

Assist families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Also, assist schools to better understand families.



Communicating

Conduct effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school programs and student progress.



Volunteering

Organize volunteers and audiences to support the school and students. Provide volunteer opportunities in various locations and at various times.



Learning at Home

Involve families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.



Decision Making

Include families as participants in school decisions and develop parent leaders and representatives.



Collaborating with the Community

Coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students and the school, and provide services to the community.

School Community Councils:

*Educators, parents
and the community
working together
for student success*

Notes



Two Sculptors

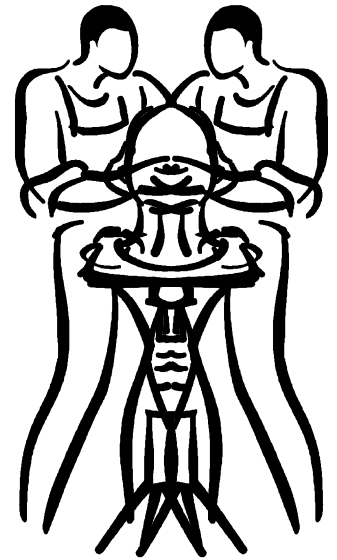
*I dreamed I saw a studio
and watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a child's mind
and they fashioned it with care.*

*One was a teacher — the tools she used
were books, music, and art.
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,
and a gentle, loving heart.*


*Day after day, the teacher toiled with a touch
that was careful, deft, and sure.
While the parent labored by her side
and polished and smoothed it o'er*

*And when at last, their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought
for the things they molded into the child
could neither be sold nor bought.*

*And each agreed they would have failed
if either had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school
and behind the teacher, the home.*



Anonymous

	Student Engagement	
Reading Comprehension	 PRAIRIE SPIRIT SCHOOL DIVISION PURSUING STUDENT SUCCESS	Staff Engagement
	Mathematical Understanding	

Prairie Spirit's Strategic Goals

Mathematical Understanding

Students will increase their knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

Critical Factors

- Mathematical reasoning
- Number sense
- Attitude towards math
- Ability to communicate mathematical ideas
- Spatial ability

Reading Comprehension

Students will increase reading comprehension in all content areas.

Critical Factors

- Monitoring comprehension
- Making inferences
- Visualizing
- Questioning
- Making connections
- Synthesizing and summarizing
- Determining importance

Student Engagement

Students will increase their involvement in and satisfaction with the Learning Community.

Critical Factors

- Clarity in expectations
- Presence of a trusting adult
- Success in academic skills
- Success in social skills
- Presence of appropriate recognition

Staff Engagement

Staff will increase their involvement in and satisfaction with the Learning Community.


Critical Factors

- Trust in senior administration
- Consulted for input
- Understand Prairie Spirit vision
- Recognized/praised for good work
- Guided by caring supervisors



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Notes

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Mathematical Understanding	