

## Tab 5 ~

## School Planning Councils

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## School Planning Councils

School planning councils represent an important partnership among educators, parents, and students in BC's public education system.

School planning councils (SPCs) have existed in some provinces for many years. They were introduced into BC in 2002 by a change to the School Act. While SPCs across Canada take various forms and function in various ways, their common purpose is to create a system for collaboration in school planning.

### The Purpose of School Planning Councils

The purpose of SPCs in BC is to formally acknowledge the importance of parent involvement in improving student achievement in our schools.

Improving student achievement for **all** students is the primary goal of the Ministry of Education.

*Preamble to materials for District Review Teams*

SPCs are part of the *Accountability Framework* created by the Ministry of Education to focus attention and resources on improving the achievement of all students in BC. The *Accountability Framework* creates an annual accountability cycle in every school, district, and the Ministry of Education. The cycle involves school plans, the district accountability contract, and district review.

Before SPCs, some schools and districts included parents in planning. With the advent of SPCs, parents in every school in the province play a major role in planning for improvement of student achievement in their school. SPCs must consult with the PAC and involve the school community in developing, monitoring, and reviewing the annual school plan.

For a full explanation of the *Accountability Framework*, see **Tab 3, The Accountability Framework ~ How It Works in BC's Public Schools**.

## The Structure of School Planning Councils

An SPC is a group within a school consisting of the principal and representatives of the teachers, parents, and students (in the case of secondary schools) in the school.

Every school in BC *must* have an SPC. The SPC is established by the school board, with representatives elected or appointed at the school. [*School Act, s. 8.1(1)*]



All sections of the School Act referred to here can be found in **Tab 2, The BC School Act.**

Members of the SPC are

- the principal of the school
- one of the teachers at the school, elected annually by secret ballot by the teachers who teach at the school
- three representatives of the school PAC elected annually by secret ballot by the PAC. Each PAC representative must be a parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school. One of the representatives must be an elected officer of the PAC.
- in schools that enroll grade 10, 11, or 12 students, one student of school age enrolled in one of those grades. The student is appointed annually by the principal after consulting with the students enrolled in those grades. [*School Act, s. 8.1(3)*]

If any of these positions is not filled, the school board has authority to fill the vacancy. [*School Act, s. 8.1(5)*]

A parent or guardian who is employed by any school board in BC is not eligible to serve as a PAC representative on an SPC.<sup>1</sup> [*School Act, s. 8.1(7)*]

Each member of the SPC has one vote. The SPC may invite non-members to attend SPC meetings as advisors, consultants, observers, or representatives of the school community, but non-members may not vote.

Elections to the SPC must be held every year. Members of a previous SPC may be re-elected. [*School Act, s. 8.1(6)*]

<sup>1</sup> A parent or guardian employed by an independent school constituted under the Independent School Act *is* eligible to serve on the SPC of a public school if the parent or guardian has a child enrolled in that public school.

## The Role of School Planning Councils

Under the School Act, the SPC in each school has one role—

*to prepare a school plan for improving student achievement in the school and for other matters contained in the school board's accountability contract relating to the school.*

“School board” means the elected board of school trustees in your district.

The SPC must submit its school plan to the school board by a date set by the board. The board must approve a school plan for every school in the district. [*School Act, s. 8.3(1) and (2)*]

Before approving the school plan, the board may consult with the SPC about modifying the plan. It may even *require* the SPC to modify the plan. *If*

- the SPC does not submit a school plan
- the SPC does not comply with a direction to modify the plan, or
- the board rejects the plan

then the board can direct the principal to prepare and submit a school plan without the SPC. [*School Act, s. 8.3(4), (5), and (6)*]

In order to prepare a school plan each year, the SPC must monitor and review the implementation and results of the current school plan.<sup>2</sup> See ***Implementing the School Plan*** on page 21 of this **Tab 5**.

## What Kind of Advice Can the SPC Give?

The SPC may advise the school board, and the board *must* consult with the SPC, on certain matters:

- the allocation of staff and resources in the school
- matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school
- educational services and programs in the school. [*School Act, s. 8.2*]

The SPC may not discuss or give advice regarding

- personal or confidential information on students, teachers, other employees, parents, or community members

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education's *Guidelines for School Planning Councils*. Available at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/intro.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/intro.htm).

- performance or conduct of individual students, teachers, other employees, parents, or community members
- terms and conditions of employment contracts
- personnel matters<sup>3</sup>
- other matters beyond its advisory or consultative roles under the School Act.

**What is the Difference Between an SPC and a PAC?**

The SPC and the PAC in a school are different organizations—they represent different people and have different purposes. The table below shows the differences.

See also *The PAC Network in BC Public Education* in **Tab 1, Parent Involvement: Basic Principles**, page 4.

<b>Comparison of SPCs and PACs</b>		
	<b>SPC</b>	<b>PAC</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Principal</li> <li>▪ One teacher elected annually by the teachers who teach at the school</li> <li>▪ Three representatives of the PAC elected annually by the PAC</li> <li>▪ In schools that enroll grade 10, 11, or 12 students, one student of school age enrolled in one of those grades, appointed annually by the principal</li> </ul>	<i>All</i> parents and guardians of students enrolled in the school
<b>Role</b>	<p><b>Specific role—</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To prepare and submit a school plan for improving student achievement in the school and for other matters contained in the school board’s accountability contract relating to the school</li> <li>▪ To consult with the PAC during preparation of the school plan</li> <li>▪ To monitor and review the school plan</li> </ul>	<p><b>Broad role—</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To be the parent voice on all matters at the school level</li> <li>▪ To support the school plan</li> </ul>
<b>Extent of advice</b>	<p><b>Specific—</b> Only matters relating to the school plan</p>	<p><b>Broad—</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ May advise the school board, principal and staff on <i>any</i> matter relating to the school, except matters assigned to the SPC</li> <li>▪ May assist the SPC as requested</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> The SPC should be familiar with collective agreements in the school and district. SPCs may discuss collective agreements in order to understand how they affect school planning.

## Steps for Electing Your PAC Representatives to the SPC

Through SPCs, parents are partners with educators and students in planning for improvement of student achievement in our schools. To participate effectively in planning, it is important to choose the three PAC representatives to the SPC carefully.

“Changes to the School Act will create a broader, more meaningful, and consistent role for parents by including them in decision-making.”

*Minister of Education  
Christy Clark, speaking to  
BCCPAC in 2002*

### *Updating your PAC’s bylaws*

The School Act *requires* PACs to have bylaws governing the election of PAC representatives to the SPC. [*School Act, s. 8(5)(b)*]

BCCPAC recommends that your bylaws contain the following:

- Among the purposes of the PAC

*To participate in the work of the school planning council through the PAC’s elected representatives*

- Election of representatives to the SPC

*a) Three representatives to the school planning council shall be elected annually from among the voting members who are not employees or elected officials of any school board or the Ministry of Education. One of these representatives must be an elected member of the PAC executive.<sup>4</sup> [School Act, s. 8.1(3)(c), (4) and (7)]*

*b) The election of representatives to the school planning council must be by secret ballot. [School Act, s. 8(6)]*

- Duties of the PAC representatives to the SPC

*The school planning council representatives will*

- (a) attend all meetings of the school planning council (SPC)*
- (b) represent, speak, and vote on behalf of the PAC at SPC meetings*
- (c) request and take direction from the PAC membership and executive*

<sup>4</sup> To meet this requirement, one of the PAC representatives to the SPC may already hold an executive position, or you may modify your PAC bylaws to create an additional executive position called “PAC Executive Representative to the SPC”.

- (d) be strong advocates for meaningful parent involvement in the school and school planning*
- (e) provide a written report to all general and executive meetings*
- (f) attend general and executive meetings as directed by the membership or executive*
- (g) submit an annual report*

For information on drafting PAC bylaws and incorporating these provisions, see **Tab 6, Constitutions and Bylaws**.

See also **Tab 7, Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability of PAC and DPAC Executives**.

### ***Defining the attributes and skills of PAC representatives to the SPC***

Your PAC representatives to the SPC are parent leaders representing the PAC in the important job of school planning. Before you hold your election, discuss the attributes and skills you expect of your representatives to enable them to participate effectively in the work of the SPC.

#### *Suggested attributes:*

- respectful, reliable, collaborative, courteous
- a team player—understands and believes in being inclusive and representative
- committed to improving student achievement through meaningful parent involvement in school planning and goal setting
- willing to represent the PAC's views even if those views differ from their own
- committed to taking direction from the PAC membership and executive
- interested in learning new skills and willing to take training

#### *Suggested skills:*

- an effective listener and speaker
- can write timely, accurate, and concise reports
- comfortable with numerical data
- comfortable presenting a point of view that may differ from their own and others' at a meeting
- able to ask difficult questions

### *Electing your representatives by secret ballot*

The School Act *requires* PACs to elect representatives to the SPC by secret ballot, called a “ballot vote”. [*School Act, s. 8(6)*]

The box below describes how to elect SPC representatives by secret ballot. This procedure can be adapted for any election or vote by secret ballot, and can be used by PACs, DPACs, and SPCs.

**Note:** The election of a representative to the DPAC *must* also be done by secret ballot. [*School Act, s. 8(6)*]

### **Conducting an Election or Vote by Secret Ballot**

#### **Preparing for a ballot vote**

- As a rule of thumb, your council should always be prepared to conduct a ballot vote at a meeting. Whether or not your bylaws say so, members can request a ballot vote on any motion or election.
- Come to the meeting prepared with slips of paper, trimmed and of reasonable size. Members will see that you have thought ahead, and will be more inclined to assist you with the process.
- Appoint two members, called “tellers”, to distribute, collect, and count the ballots.

#### **Requesting nominations**

- Conduct elections for different positions separately.
- State the position or positions to be filled, and request nominations from the members present. Nominations do not need to be seconded. It may be useful to review the expected duties of each position before receiving nominations.
- When no further nominations are forthcoming, declare nominations closed.

#### **If more than one SPC candidate is a PAC executive member**

- One of the three representatives to the SPC *must* be a PAC executive member [*School Act, s. 8.1(4)*]. The other two (or either one of them) *may* also be PAC executive members.
- If more than one SPC candidate is a PAC executive member, then conduct the SPC election in two rounds.
- First, conduct the election for the person who will act as the PAC executive representative. Then conduct the election for the other two representatives. The unsuccessful candidates (including unsuccessful PAC executive members) from the first round may enter the second round.

#### **Appointing scrutineers**

- Each candidate may appoint a scrutineer to observe the conduct of the election and the counting of ballots. This is not common in PACs, but it may be useful to offer.

#### **Taking the vote**

- The tellers will distribute one blank ballot to each voting member present, including the chair.

- Remind members how many candidates they may vote for. In the first round, members will be voting for one PAC executive representative. In the second round, members may vote for one or two representatives; they do not have to vote for two if they don't want to. All choices for the SPC should be written on the same ballot.
- Members will write the names of the candidates they wish to vote for, and deposit their ballots into a box overseen by the tellers and scrutineers. Tellers and scrutineers, if voting members, will also vote and deposit their ballots.

### Counting ballots

- The tellers will count the ballots, overseen by the scrutineers. Under Robert's Rules of Order, blank ballots are considered abstentions and are not counted. If a name is incorrectly written, it should be counted if the voter's intention is clear.
- The tellers will report the result to the chair who will announce it to the meeting.
- A candidate must receive 50% plus 1 of the votes cast (excluding blank ballots) to be elected. Any candidate who does not receive the required number of votes is not elected, even if this results in a position not being filled.

#### Example:

**Round 1 for PAC executive representative:** 23 ballots are cast, 2 ballots are blank. This leaves 21 ballots to be counted. A candidate needs 50% plus 1, or 12, votes to win.

Candidate #1 receives 13 votes. Elected.

Candidate #2 receives 8 votes. Not elected.

**Round 2 for remaining two representatives:** 21 ballots are cast, one ballot is blank. This leaves 20 ballots to be counted. A candidate needs 50% plus 1, or 11, votes to win.

Candidate #1 receives 17 votes. Elected.

Candidate #2 receives 9 votes. Not elected. One position is therefore vacant.

- A motion is usually called for to destroy the ballots after the election.

### What if there are not enough candidates to warrant an election?

- **You must conduct the ballot vote anyway!** Under the School Act, a secret ballot vote for PAC representatives to the SPC and DPAC is mandatory. **A PAC may not appoint or acclaim a parent to any of these positions.** [*School Act, s. 8(6)*]
- The purpose of the ballot vote is to ensure fairness and to allow members to exercise their choice privately, without influence from others. Even with enough candidates, a ballot vote may result in one or more candidates not being elected and a position remaining vacant. This is the will of the membership, expressed secretly and without influence.

### Filling a vacancy

- If a position is vacant after an election, or becomes vacant part way through a term, consult your PAC bylaws and school district SPC policy on filling vacancies.
- Keep in mind that an election to fill a vacancy must be done by secret ballot.
- Under the School Act, the school board may appoint a person to fill a vacancy on a school planning council. [*School Act, s. 8.1(5)*]

## School and District Policies on SPCs

School districts, and some schools, have developed policies on SPCs. It is important for your PAC and DPAC to be familiar with school and district policies as they have important implications for SPCs in your district.

Ask your PAC or DPAC chair, principal, or school board office for your school and district policies. Many policies are available on the website of the BC School Trustees Association at

[www.bcsta.org/policy/polindex.htm](http://www.bcsta.org/policy/polindex.htm)

Your school and/or district policy may cover such things as

- target dates or deadlines for formation of the SPC and election of representatives
- meeting procedure, including minimum number of meetings per year, convening meetings, quorum, confidentiality, decision-making, telephone or electronic meetings, agenda, record-keeping
- role and authority of the chair
- roles and responsibilities of other positions, for example, secretary
- role of advisors, consultants, observers, and non-voting members and representatives
- alternates and filling vacancies
- committees
- consultation with the PAC, students, school staff, school board, special groups, and broader community
- target dates or deadlines for the school plan, including drafts for consultation
- powers of the board and principal in the event timelines or deadlines are not met
- financial matters
- conduct, discipline, and retaliation.

## SPC Procedure

SPC procedure is governed by the School Act and school and district policies. As mentioned above, your district (and perhaps your school) has an SPC policy that, in all likelihood, addresses procedure in some detail.

PACs and DPACs are required by the School Act to make bylaws governing meetings and the business and conduct of their affairs.<sup>5</sup> SPCs, on the other hand, are not required to make bylaws or rules of procedure because procedure is largely determined by district policy.

<sup>5</sup> School Act, s. 8(5) for PACs, and s. 8.5(2) for DPACs.

Depending on the detail contained in your school and district policies, your SPC will be able to determine certain procedural matters, such as roles, responsibilities, and meetings, based on the following:

- the needs and schedules of members
- the skills, talents, and experience of members
- principles of good meetings.

As a PAC representative, you are entitled to bring your knowledge and experience of good procedure to the table. All SPC members are entitled to participate in determining SPC procedure, consistent with the School Act and policy.

For more information on meetings and decision-making, see **Tab 9, Decision-Making in PACs, DPACs, and School Planning Councils**, and **Tab 14, Effective Meetings**.

## Examining Data for the School Plan

SPCs are required to develop school plans with clearly stated goals for improving student achievement in the school.

To develop and monitor school goals, SPCs must examine data on student achievement from a wide range of sources. Data reveal patterns in student performance, participation, satisfaction, and many other things related to learning, and indicate where changes in practice can or should be made.

It is important to reflect carefully on the data, their sources, and what they mean. Conclusions about data may change on close examination of the circumstances in which the data were collected. Questions to ask are

- *Why are the results this way?*
- *What do the results really mean?*

On the following pages, you will find tips to help you interpret data, as well as a list of suggested data and sources.

It's not the raw scores that count, but what you do with them!

*Michael Fullan, Macleans,  
May 2001*

## Tips for Understanding Data<sup>6</sup>

### Together, we create the meaning!

- Data is information that can tell a story.
- We are looking for patterns.
- We need several sources of data.
- Through thoughtful discussion with others, we will understand the data better and avoid premature conclusions.

### Tips for looking at data

- Keep in mind that all tests have limitations.
- Look for patterns and trends over time. (You need three sets of data to predict a trend.)
- Check participation rates. Use actual numbers as well as percentages.
- Check the data for sub-populations (for example, gender, Aboriginal, ESL).
- Compare data from different sources and different levels (e.g. classroom, school, district, and province).
- Ask questions and consider alternate hypotheses.
- Plan for improvement based on data.

### Questions to ask when looking at data

- What important points seem to emerge?
- Do you notice any patterns or trends?
- Based on this data, what appear to be the strengths of the school?
- Based on this data, what goals might be included in a school plan?
- What is missing?

### The purpose of data is to IMPROVE, not to prove!

- We look at data to *improve* schools, not to prove that some schools are better than others.
- Evidence is important—we want improvement to be measurable. We need to base decisions on something more than what we *think* or *feel*.

### Try this exercise to start the conversation...

- Think of something you enjoy doing—a hobby, sport, skill, or talent.
- Ask yourself, how good are you?
- Were you always that good?
- Are you improving? How do you know?
- How good do you want to be? By when?
- How will you know you are getting better?

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from *Data and the District Review: Parent Information Workshop*. Ministry of Education District Review Training, Richmond, January 14, 2004

### Types and Sources of Data

Data	Source
<p><b>Grades K to 12 report card information, including interim reports</b></p> <p><i>Primary (K-3) year-end results</i>            Not Yet Meeting Expectations; Approaching Expectations; Meeting Expectations; Exceeding Expectations            Anecdotal information</p> <p><i>Intermediate, Middle, Secondary</i>            Letter grades, A, B, C+, C, C-</p> <p>This data may be presented as the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations.</p> <p>Also included in report card information:  <i>Work ethic standing</i>            G (Good Work Ethic)            S (Satisfactory Work Ethic)            N (Work Ethic Needs Improvement)</p>	<p><b>School or district</b></p>
<p><b>Classroom tests</b></p> <p><b>Science 9 cross-grade exam results</b></p> <p><b>Writing portfolios</b></p> <p><b>District Grade 6 writing assessment</b></p> <p><b>School-wide writes</b></p>	<p><b>School or district</b></p>
<p><b>Grade completion rates</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who successfully complete one grade level</p>	<p><b>School or district</b></p>
<p><b>Grade-to-grade transition</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who successfully complete one grade level and continue to the next grade</p>	<p><b>School, district, or Ministry of Education at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></b></p>
<p><b>Attendance information</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students late or absent</p>	<p><b>School or district</b></p>
<p><b>Discipline data</b></p> <p>Record of discipline incidents in the school. Includes suspensions.</p>	<p><b>School or district</b></p>
<p><b>BC Performance Standards, including Quick Scales</b></p> <p>School-based assessment tools for reading, writing, numeracy, and social responsibility.</p>	<p><b>School, district, or Ministry at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/</a></b></p>

<p><b>Ministry Satisfaction Surveys, Grades 4, 7, 10, 12</b></p> <p>Contain specific questions for parents, students, and teachers. Results are rated from <i>Very Low</i> to <i>Very High</i></p>	<p><b>Ministry at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></b></p>
<p><b>Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), Grades 4 and 7</b></p> <p>Standardized Ministry test measuring student performance relative to provincial standards in reading comprehension, writing, and numeracy. NYW (Not Yet Within); M (Meeting); E (Exceeding) Expectations</p>	<p><b>Ministry at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results/">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results/</a></b></p>
<p><b>CAT 3 (Canadian Achievement Test Version 3), Grades 4, 7, 10</b></p> <p>Standardized tests used extensively in Canada. Measure reading, language, and mathematics skills. Results are compared to results of students at the same grade level across the country. Results are reported as <i>Below Average</i>, <i>Average</i>, and <i>Above Average</i>.</p>	<p><b>School</b></p>
<p><b>Provincial exam results</b></p> <p>Exams are administered in Grades 10, 11, and 12 for certain subjects. Results are compared to other schools in the district, public schools in the province, and all schools (public and private) in the province.</p>	<p><b>Ministry</b></p>
<p><b>Grade 12 provincial exam results</b></p> <p>Administered yearly to Grade 12 students in certain subjects. Results are compared to other schools in the district, public schools in the province, and all schools (public and private) in the province. Participation rates are also included.</p>	<p><b>Ministry at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></b></p>
<p><b>Participation rates in courses</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of eligible students who register for a course</p>	<p><b>School and District</b></p>
<p><b>Middle/secondary course failure rate</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who were unsuccessful in completing a particular course</p>	<p><b>School</b></p>
<p><b>Career programs data</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who have met the minimum 30 hour (Grades 9-12) community contact time required to graduate</p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who complete the additional 100 hours Career Prep Certification</p>	<p><b>School</b></p>
<p><b>Graduation exit survey</b></p>	<p><b>School and district</b></p>
<p><b>Graduation rate</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who receive their Dogwood Graduation Diploma within 5 years of entering Grade 8</p>	<p><b>Ministry at <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></b></p>

<p><b>Demographic data</b></p> <p>Proportion males          Proportion females          Proportion Aboriginal          Proportion special needs          Proportion ESL (English as a Second Language)          Proportion non-English home language          Number of educators per FTE (Full Time Equivalent)</p>	<p><b>School or Ministry at</b>  <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></p>
<p>Proportion of families with annual income under \$30,000          Formal education level of population          Proportion with high school graduation certificate          Proportion with Bachelors Degree or higher          Proportion of single parent families</p>	<p><b>Census or Ministry at</b>  <a href="http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php">www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reportfinder/publicschools.php</a></p>
<p><b>Extra-curricular involvement</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students participating in extra-curricular activities</p>	<p><b>School</b></p>
<p><b>Provincial and district scholarships</b></p> <p>Percentage or actual number of students who receive provincial or district scholarships</p>	<p><b>School and district</b></p>

## Communication and Consultation

The School Act *requires* the SPC to consult with the PAC during preparation of the school plan. This requirement is intended to ensure that all parents in the school have the opportunity to participate in preparing the school plan. [*School Act, s. 8.3(3)*]

Your PAC representatives to the SPC are responsible for facilitating communication and consultation between the PAC and SPC, working together with the PAC executive. Your goal should be to involve all parents in the consultation.

Suggestions for communicating with PAC members and soliciting their opinions are

- regular reports at general and executive meetings, with adequate time for discussion and questions
- special information meetings
- an all-partner discussion meeting on a professional development day
- bulletins and updates, sent through newsletters, e-mail, or website
- parent surveys to gather opinion on specific questions, by paper and/or phone
- written information available through the parent centre or school office
- informal communication in the parent centre, hallways, at open houses, and meet-the-teacher events.

For more suggestions on communicating with parents, see **Tab 16, Communication in Your PAC, DPAC, and School Planning Council, Tab 10, Representing All Voices: Building an Inclusive Council, and Tab 19, Contagious Enthusiasm ~ How to Get Parents Involved.**

## Creating the School Plan

The school plan is a statement of goals, objectives, and strategies for improving student achievement in the school. Most school districts use a standard template for school plans. Many templates include the following items for each goal:

- Statement of the goal
- Objectives, with performance indicators and targets
- Strategies, including training needs, resources, and cost
- Evaluation plan
- Communication plan

<p><b>S</b>pecific  <b>M</b>easurable  <b>A</b>chievable  <b>R</b>elevant  <b>T</b>imely</p>
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The Ministry of Education has certain expectations for school plans. Some templates have these expectations written into them. For example, the Ministry wants school goals to be

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timely

Each goal should include a strategy for achieving it. Strategies should be

- *clear* in their intent, logical, and based on best practices
- *innovative* and creative
- *reasonable*, given the people, resources, and time available
- *acceptable* to the stakeholders who will be responsible for implementing them.

Overall, school plans should include

- analysis and rationale for *each* goal selected
- data sources used in the analysis, and a description of how the data were interpreted
- specific performance targets for improving student achievement
- groups of students targeted for focused attention
- data the school will use to track progress.

The school plan should be clear on what success will look like and how the school community will know when success has been achieved. The plan should also be clear on its fundamental benefits for students and the community.

SPCs need to take care to consider the achievement of *all* students in the school. The school plan should indicate groups of students that may be targeted for focused attention.

The school board can require the SPC to address matters contained in the district's accountability contract relating to the school [*School Act, s. 8.3(2)*]. The board is ultimately responsible for decisions regarding student achievement in the district. It can

- accept the school plan
- return the school plan to the SPC for modification in whole or in part by a specified date
- reject the school plan and direct the principal to develop an alternate plan.

[*School Act, s. 8.3(5) and (6)*]

It's ALL about Student Achievement—  
ALL Achievements and Achievements for ALL  
*BC Ministry of Education's  
Accountability Framework*

### ***Key Areas of Inquiry***

The Ministry of Education encourages schools and districts to use the *Key Areas for Inquiry* used by District Review Teams as guidelines in formulating school plans and district accountability contracts.<sup>7</sup> This helps produce consistency among school plans, accountability contracts, and district reviews. The *Key Areas for Inquiry* are

1. Goals
2. Rationale
3. Data
4. Strategies
5. Structures
6. Results
7. Communication
8. Teamwork—District and School Coherence
9. Teamwork—District and Parent Involvement
10. Leadership/Teamwork<sup>8</sup>

On the following page, you will find two examples of school goals, objectives, and strategies.

<sup>7</sup> See **Tab 3, The Accountability Framework: How It Works in BC's Public Schools**

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education's *District Review Guide 2003-2004*. Available at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/review/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/review/).

## Examples of School Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

### Goal 1: To improve writing skills among students in Kindergarten to Grade 7.

#### Objectives:

1. To increase the number of students who meet or exceed expectations in writing.
2. To improve students' ability to communicate ideas and information in both words and pictures.
3. To improve students' ability to write clearly and use variety in written language.
4. To improve students' use of writing conventions: complete sentences, spelling, capital letters, punctuation, pronouns, and legibility.
5. To improve home-to-school communication in the area of student writing.

#### Strategies:

1. Provide school- and district-sponsored staff development opportunities, with a focus on current research, methodology, and use of BC Performance Standards. Invite parents to attend.
2. Hold a workshop series for parents and staff on ways to help children at home with writing. Schedule daytime and evening workshops to accommodate as many parents as possible.
3. Discuss home-to-school communication at staff and PAC meetings. Include strategies as a regular item in newsletters and other communications to parents.
4. Encourage parents and other community members to assist in the classroom with reading and writing, including Readers' Circles.
5. Increase special education assistance and learning assistance in the regular classroom, with a focus on writing.
6. Increase learning assistance support for lesser achieving students.
7. Expand opportunities for students to use computers for written expression.
8. Hold a district-wide write in October, with a follow-up in mid-May for comparison.

### Goal 2: To increase the percentage of students meeting *Good Work Ethic* standing from 25% to 30% by June 20\_\_.

#### Objectives:

1. To improve student work habits in all areas of the curriculum.
2. To improve home-to-school communication and cooperation in the area of student work habits.

#### Strategies:

1. Develop school-wide work habit standards through consultation among the principal, teachers, counsellors, parents, and students in the school.
2. Hold a workshop series for parents and staff on ways to encourage students at home and school to develop good work habits.
3. Discuss home-to-school communication at staff and PAC meetings, and include a regular item in newsletters and other communications to parents.
4. Motivate students to improve their work habits by holding a draw each term. The names of all students who achieve *Good Work Ethic* standing will be entered. Fifteen names will be selected to receive a \$10 gift certificate from a local bookstore, funds to be donated by the PAC, with a discount to be provided by the bookstore.
5. Recognize at-risk students who show improvement in attendance, behaviour, or grades. Hold a pizza lunch and present those students with a book or CD.

### ***Giving special consideration to stakeholders***

For a plan to be successful, those responsible for implementing it must support the plan and be willing to do what is needed to see it through.

The consultation process built into SPCs, and reflected in many school and district policies, acknowledges the importance of all stakeholders in the school planning process. *Achieving school goals is a shared responsibility.*

The SPC must ensure that all stakeholders are included in the planning process and are satisfied with the process and the decisions made.

Your school plan is a public document. Your school board is required to make it available to all parents of students attending your school.

It may be posted on your school or district website. Or ask your principal or school district office.

### ***Giving special consideration to resources***

The SPC must also consider the resources available to implement the plan. Some questions to ask are:

- Does the school have the funds to undertake this initiative (expand the library or music program)? Are funds available from the district? If not, what sources of funding might be available? How can the PAC and community help?
- Does the school have sufficient trained staff to provide these services to students (a remedial after-school math or reading club)? If not, how can the school work with the district to obtain the necessary staffing? Are there opportunities for the PAC and community to help?
- Does the school have the space to expand this program (physical education or drama)? If not, are there community or other facilities available to the school?
- How will this affect department staffing and schedules (increasing visual arts available to grade 8 and 9 students)?
- Does the school have sufficient office staff to undertake this task (contact parents when students are late or absent)? If not, what can the school do to arrange the necessary staffing for this task? Can the PAC and community help?

## Implementing the School Plan

The SPC's responsibilities extend beyond completing the school plan and receiving approval from the board.

Using school, district, and Ministry data, the SPC will monitor progress toward the goals contained in the plan. On an ongoing basis, the SPC will ask

- Is the school plan being followed?
- Are the strategies being implemented in a timely way as set out in the plan?
- Is progress being made toward achieving the goals?
- Have the goals been achieved?
- Were the goals measurable, as well as achievable?
- Were the strategies workable and successful?
- Were the stakeholders satisfied with the goals and strategies?
- What problems and concerns were encountered along the way?
- What could have been done to avoid or resolve those problems and concerns?
- Given the experience with this school plan, what should the SPC be looking at in the future?

## Resolving Concerns within the SPC

As in any organization, concerns may arise within the SPC as you work together toward completing the school plan. Should this happen, consider the following sources of information and assistance:

- school and/or district policy on SPCs
- internal policy and procedures that the SPC may have developed
- *Robert's Rules of Order* or other books on meeting procedure<sup>9</sup>
- BCCPAC Member Services<sup>10</sup>
- BCCPAC Advocacy Project<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Tab 14, *Effective Meetings*

<sup>10</sup> See Tab 20, *BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils*

<sup>11</sup> See Tab 11, *Speaking Up! The BCCPAC Advocacy Project*

## The School District's Accountability Contract

The school plan is part of the annual accountability cycle in every school, district, and the Ministry of Education.

By October 31<sup>st</sup> each year, every school board must submit an accountability contract to the Minister of Education. The accountability contract contains goals, strategies, and rationale for improving student achievement in the district and other matters the Minister may require. [*School Act, s. 79.2*]

Your school district's accountability contract is a public document. It is available on the Ministry of Education's website at

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc\\_contracts/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc_contracts/)

It may also be available on your school or district website.

*The most important information in the development of the district's accountability contract comes from the school plans created by every school in the district.*

School plans are the board's primary source of information about what needs to be done to improve student achievement in the district. School plans tell the board what each school community is thinking about student achievement in the school, where the greatest needs lie, and the best practices SPCs have found to achieve goals.

SPC members, and the school community at large, can take pride in their contribution to improving student achievement for *all* students in their district.

For more information on accountability contracts, see **Tab 3, The Accountability Framework ~ How It Works in BC's Public Schools**.