

# Letter of Agreement

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## Articles

The purpose of this letter is to establish the terms and conditions of the agreement between the South Shore Regional School Board, New Germany Rural High School Advisory Council, and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture to operate an advisory council at the school level. The parties agree to the following Articles of Agreement:

### Duration of the Agreement

- The agreement starts September 1, 2013. The agreement will be reviewed annually, by the SAC.

### Structure of the Council

- a. The membership of the Advisory Council will include:
  - The principal (non-voting ex officio)
  - 4 Parents
  - 2 Students (one from grades 7-9, one from grades 10-12)
  - 3 Teachers
  - 1 Support Staff
  - 2 Community Members

<b>Member</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>Year 2013-14</b>	<b>End of Membership</b>
<b>Principal</b>	Steven McGill			Permanent
<b>Staff</b>	Sandra Joudrey	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	September 2014
<b>Staff</b>	Sherrene Delaney	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	September 2014
<b>Support Staff</b>	Margot McDade	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	September 2015
<b>Staff</b>	Joyce Veinot-Gates			
<b>Student Council President</b>	Brian Daniels			June 2014
<b>Student Junior High</b>	Drew Whalen			June 2014
<b>Parent</b>	Andrea Whalen	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	September 2014
<b>Parent</b>	Sally Demone	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	September 2015
<b>Parent</b>	Eva Cook	2 <sup>nd</sup> Term		September 2015
<b>Parent</b>	Norma Barkhouse- Woodworth	2 <sup>nd</sup> Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	September 2014
<b>Community</b>	Howard Gibson	2 <sup>nd</sup> Term	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	September 2014
<b>Community</b>	Kelly Hansen	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	September 2015

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## Decision Making Process

The Council will attempt to make all decisions by consensus. If consensus is not possible a vote shall be conducted. Only motions which receive a two-third majority of positive votes shall be passed by the Council. Each member of Council has one vote. The principal of the school as an *ex officio* member, does not have a vote.

## Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be scheduled at least six times during the school year, including an annual general meeting. At the first meeting of the school year all dates will be scheduled and recorded for the school year.

Meetings will be a maximum of 1.5 hours and may be extended for 30 minutes with the consensus of the Advisory Council.

## School Advisory Council Commitments

New Germany Rural High School Advisory Council will be responsible for:

- Assuring all partners has a voice in decision making.
- Collaborating with all school staff in developing a Continuous School Improvement-plan.
- Assisting in developing school policies which promote academic excellence and a positive learning environment.
- Developing ways and strategies to improve and support the extra-curricular programs and special projects in the school.
- Advising the principal and staff on the school-level issues related to programs, school practices and policies such as fundraising, student discipline and parent-school and school-community communication and similar matters.
- Advising the school board on programs, school practices and policies such as fundraising, student discipline and parent-school and school-community communication and similar matters.
- Contributing to CSI undertaken during the year, specific results that have been achieved, and factors which have influenced the results.
- Maintaining effective communication among the partners by holding regular, open public meetings and circulating written information.
- Participating in the selection of the principal of the school in accordance with provincial and school board policies and contractual obligations.
- Developing by-laws to guide the structure and operations of the Advisory council, and appending them to the Letter of Agreement.

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## School Board Commitment

The South Shore Regional School Board will make a commitment to provide the following support to New Germany Rural High School Advisory Council.

- Provide a facilitator to assist that School Advisory Council as required.
- Acknowledge the receipt of the Annual Report with recommendations from the Board.

## Department of Education Commitments

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture will support the New Germany Rural High School Advisory Council by:

- Developing educational materials to assist School Advisory Councils in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities
- Providing a model and framework for Continuous School Improvement.
- Providing information on new curriculum and policy initiatives

## Parties to the Agreement

We clearly understand and agree to follow through on the commitments made in this Letter of Agreement, as revised September 2013.

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NGRHS Advisory Council Chair

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Date

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NGRHS Principal

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Date

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South Shore Regional School Board

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Date

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## APPENDIX A: SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS

School Advisory Council by-laws are intended to guide the structure and operations of the SAC.

### Membership

The school principal will serve as a permanent non-voting member, and cannot serve as SAC chair.

### Membership

- The Advisory Council for New Germany Rural High School will have 13 members. Membership representation shall be:
  - a) 4 parents/legal guardians of the children currently enrolled in the school
  - b) 2 students, one representative from a Junior High Grade and one representative from a Senior High Grade.
  - c) 3 teachers from the school
  - d) 1 support staff (support staff includes, custodians, teacher assistants, cafeteria staff, secretaries, bus drivers and library assistants).
  - e) 2 community members, typically an individual without children in the school, but representative of community groups involved with access or programming within the school.
  - f) The principal of New Germany Rural High will serve as an *ex officio* member.
- Members of staff (teachers or support staff) of New Germany Rural High School are not eligible to serve on the Advisory Council as parent or community representatives.

### Length of Term

The term for any position will be no longer than two years. In order to facilitate continuity, terms for elected or appointed members will be staggered so that approximately 50% of the representatives are retained from one year to the next. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms on the Advisory Council.

### Attendance

Membership is to contact the chair 2 days before the meeting date if they can't attend the meeting. This allows the chair to guarantee that the council has a quorum. If there isn't a quorum the meeting will be cancelled.

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## Guidelines for School Advisory Council Elections

- All elections will be conducted by secret ballot.
- Teacher and/or support staff representatives are to be elected by teachers and support staff in September.
- Student representatives are to be elected by the student body in September.
- Parent representatives are to be elected in September by parents who have children enrolled in the school by phone or email.
- Community representatives will be nominated by a nominating committee consisting of administration and another SAC member. The community representatives will be voted on by the Council by email (secret ballot).
- Approximately 50% of the members will be maintained from one year to the next to facilitate continuity on the Council. This is achieved through staggered terms as outlined in Article Number 2(b).
- The Chair is elected annually by the Council from among the School Advisory Council membership. The Chair should be a parent or other community member.

## Basics of Addressing a Motion

A motion is a course of action recommended by the person putting the motion forward.

The group can only consider one motion at a time. If there is a motion on the table, then a second motion will not be “heard”. The mover states his/her motion; usually in positive terms (i.e. you would move that the organization pursue such-and such a course of action, rather than that the organization NOT pursue another.) The motion statement is structured to start with the words **“I move that...”**

A second person, or seconder, declares **“I second the motion”** (meaning, “there are two here who think this is right”). If there is no seconder to the motion, it will not be considered by the group – it is considered “lost”.

If the motion is seconded, the Chair declares to the group that **“It has been moved and seconded that....”** The motion must now remain unchanged while it is discussed and debated by the group. The membership are given an opportunity to express their views or ask questions about the motion.

All comments, starting with the motion and the second and running right through the entire process, should be directed at the Chair. In this way, the Chair operates as debate or discussion “traffic cop” by recognizing only one person at a time and making sure that everyone plays by the same rules.

If no one has any comments or questions on the motion, it can go immediately to a vote. Otherwise, when there has been a full discussion and no further comments or questions are forthcoming from the floor, the Chair will then ask for a vote. This is called **“Calling the**

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**Question**". Depending on the circumstances, votes can be:

- By the show of hands
- By voice shouting "Aye" or "No" to indicate positive or negative vote.
- By ballot where secrecy is important.

In addition to these methods, the Chair, if he/she judges there to be a **general consensus on the motion, can say, "There being no objection, The motion is passed"**. The pause allows any individual to say that they object. **If there are not objectors, then the motion is carried or passed.** However, if there is even one objector; the motion must be put to a formal vote.

Once a motion is put to a vote that is the end of that motion one way or the other. It cannot be reconsidered by the group, whether it was passed or lost, unless there is a new motion to reconsider or rescind it.

## **Vacated Positions**

The SAC will refill vacated positions by holding a special election for that position or by appointing a person for a term not to exceed the AGM. Vacant positions must be refilled by individuals from the same membership group as the person who vacated the position.

## **Delinquent Membership**

Any member missing 3 consecutive regular meetings of the Council without excuse shall be advised that their attendance at the next meeting is required, or the Council shall consider the seat vacant and take the necessary steps to fill it.

## **Executive**

The executive of the SAC (chair, vice chair, secretary, and any additional member) shall be annually elected from among the members. This election will occur before September 30. The principal is an ex-officio member of the executive.

## **Meetings**

All SAC meetings will be open to the public. The SAC shall meet at least six times per year, including an annual general meeting.

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## **Agenda**

- The chair of the SAC will develop the meeting agenda in timely consultation with the principal and other SAC members. The agenda will be distributed electronically prior to the meeting's scheduled date.
- Individuals not on the Council who wish to have the Council consider an issue or proposal will forward such a request to the School office at least one week prior to the meeting.
- The Executive will strive to assure that meeting agendas are not unduly crowded so as to enable adequate time to discuss the business of the Council within the normal time frame of meetings.

## **Minutes**

Minutes will be kept for each meeting and included in the school's official records which will be kept in a binder in the school's office. Once minutes are approved by the SAC, they will be available to the public.

## **Support**

The school will provide, within the limits of its financial resources, support services, communication, and other reasonable assistance associated with the SAC's activities. These costs are expected to be minimal.

## **Adopting/Amending By-laws**

By-laws will be adopted or amended by a consensus decision of SAC members at the AGM. These will be forwarded to the school board for approval, and the by-laws or amendments to them become effective upon receipt of this approval. The By-Laws may be amended or adopted at the AGM and only after Notice of Motion has been given at the previous SAC meeting. Notice of Motion must include the details of the proposed changes to the By-Laws.

## **Quorum**

The quorum of the SAC will be a simple majority of its members. For example, a twelve member SAC (not including the principal) would have a quorum of seven members.

## **Public Statements**

The SAC chair or vice-chair, in consultation with the principal, shall be responsible for making any public statements that may be required, on behalf of the SAC.

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## Suspension Review and Recommendation Committee

- The committee will be comprised of parental and community members of the School Advisory Council.
- A quorum for the Suspension Review and Recommendation Committee will be 3 members.
- Decision will be by majority vote.

## **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA**

New Germany Rural High School Advisory Council  
MEETING AGENDA  
Date

1. Call to order
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of minutes
4. Correspondence
5. CSI update (standing agenda item)
6. Old business (items from previous agenda)
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
7. New Business (current items)
  - a.
  - b.
8. Financial Report
9. Administration Report
10. Student's Report
11. Special reports and/or presentations
  - a.
  - b.
12. Next meeting date
13. Adjournment



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## APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PROCEDURES FOR DECISION-MAKING

We agree to use the following principles and procedures when making SAC decisions:

### Principles

- We will employ democratic processes and strategies in our decision making.
- All SAC members will have an opportunity to participate in decision making.
- SAC members are responsible for participating in decision making.
- All members will support SAC decisions once they have been made.
- Consultation will be carried out with parents, school staff, students and community members as appropriate.

### Procedures

- We will gather information and consult with partners when appropriate.
- Topics and issues will be discussed in a structured way prior to decision making.
- We will decide on the best method for decision making (consensus, voting and consultation).
- We will attempt to reach a consensus on all SAC decisions. If we cannot reach a consensus, the decision will be tabled until the next meeting.
- Occasionally we will vote on particular issues, where consensus cannot be reached.
- When we use a voting strategy, two-thirds will be required for a majority.
- If there is not a two-thirds majority, no advice will be given.
- When appropriate, we will consult with other representatives of the respective partners and return for a second discussion and decision-making session.
- We will record decisions and methods used in making specific decisions.

## APPENDIX D: APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LETTER OF AGREEMENT

These are the criteria used by school boards and the Department of Education to assess proposed letters of agreement. They are included here as guidance for SAC members drafting such letters.

- Conformity to membership guidelines (see page 5 of this Handbook)
- List of members, position or group being represented, and duration of term
- Description of duration of the Letter of Agreement
- Description of decision-making procedure
- Description of meeting schedule
- Description of commitment to school improvement in the list of SAC commitments, as set out in the sample Letter of Agreement
- Establishment of written by-laws, included with the Letter of Agreement
- Acceptable commitments by the School Advisory Council, including a commitment to diversity, and absence of expectation of budgetary resources
- Acceptable commitments by the school board

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- Acceptable commitments by the Department of Education
- Acceptance by the School Advisory Council, school board and Department of Education
- Conformance with school board and Department of Education policy

## **APPENDIX E: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

These guidelines are intended to ensure conduct is respectful, equitable, and peoples' contributions are valued and have meaning. This is fundamental to most citizens' willingness to volunteer their time, and feel their contribution is meaningful.

- The chair communicates the meeting time and location. The chair organizes the agenda in collaboration with the principal and provides the agenda for the meeting.
- The chair calls the meeting to order.
- The chair recognizes members before they speak.
- All members are provided a fair opportunity to express themselves on the agenda items.
- Each person wishing to speak should be permitted to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time.
- The chair moves the meeting along and ensures it remains balanced.
- If time does not permit full discussion on an item, it may be tabled for a future meeting.
- Every member is equal and is treated fairly.