



School Board – School Council Communications Protocol

1. Background

School boards are public bodies established by the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Board trustees are elected or appointed from various zones and are collectively responsible for the delivery of educational services and Kindergarten – Grade 12 curriculum, as prescribed by the Department of Education, for all schools in the district.

The *Schools Act, 1997* requires that each school administrator establish a school council. School council members are also elected or appointed and collectively serve as advisory bodies to their schools.

School councils are school, family and community partnerships. They bring together educational professionals, parents, students and other community members and build on collective knowledge, skills, abilities, interests and resources to enhance the education and development of children. The collaborative efforts of school councils have had a positive influence in improving the teaching and learning environments for the children in the school they serve. (*A Handbook for School Councils, Second Edition, Revised June 2008*)

Nova Central School Board values the role of school councils in providing feedback for key initiatives of the board and in identifying issues that they may need to address. The board wishes to be consistent and fair in its response to all school councils. The following are guidelines for formal consultations with school councils, and for responding to issues brought forward by school councils.

2. Contact Person

The primary contact person for all school councils within Nova Central School District is the school administrator at individual schools.

3. Board-initiated Consultations

From time to time, the Nova Central School Board Trustees may seek input from school councils on various matters such as the board's strategic plan or a particular policy.

When seeking formal input, the following steps shall be taken:

1. On behalf of the board, the Director of Education or designate shall write (by letter/email) to the school administrator and inform him/her about the consultation process.
2. The Director shall advise the school administrator of the process for obtaining feedback. This may include:
 - a. written submissions;
 - b. meetings with individual school councils;
 - c. meetings arranged with various school council representatives;
 - or,
 - d. Formal consultations with school council chairs/designates.
3. The school administrator shall inform the school council of the request for information/attendance at a meeting. The school council shall decide how to respond and who shall participate.

4. Communication of Issues from School Councils to School Boards

School councils may identify issues that fall under the mandate of the board or the Department of Education. In the event that school councils identify a need to bring such an issue to the board's attention, it is expected that the following steps be taken:

- The school administrator, on behalf of the school council, shall bring the issue to the attention of the Director of Education, preferably in writing.
- The Director of Education shall respond to the school administrator and may also communicate with the school council chair if s/he deems this to be necessary. In such situations, the Director of Education shall advise the school administrator that s/he is contacting the school council chair.

- If the school council is not satisfied with the response from the Director of Education, it may write to the Nova Central School Board of Trustees. It is expected that any correspondence sent to the board shall be copied to the Director of Education.
- School council chairs shall ensure that school administrators are made aware of any correspondence being sent from their school council to the Director of Education or the Board of Trustees.

When issues or appeals by school councils are communicated to the Board of Trustees at a regular meeting, the matter may be either returned to the Director of Education for further follow-up, or the matter may be discussed by the board as a whole.

5. Communication by school councils to individual board trustees

From time to time, school councils or individual members of school councils may approach individual board trustees to discuss issues or advocate for specific benefits for their school. It is expected that trustees will ascertain whether the matter:

- has been discussed with the school administrator
- has been communicated to the Director of Education.

If the matter has been communicated to the Director of Education, the trustee shall advise the individuals that they should ensure that their school council has submitted their information in writing to the Director of Education. If the school council is not satisfied with the response from the Director, they can appeal the decision (see Section 4).

If a school council (or individual members of a school council) writes to an individual board trustee, it is expected that trustees will ensure that the matter is brought to the attention of the Director of Education and the Board Chair.

If the matter is to be dealt with at the board level, it may be added to the agenda for a regular meeting of the board.

6. Requests for the Director of Education or Trustees to attend school council meetings

School councils may wish to meet with the Director of Education or individual board trustees to discuss issues of concern.

Invitations for the Director of Education to attend a school council meeting shall be sent to the Director via the school administrator.

Trustees who are invited to attend a school council meeting shall notify the Director of Education and Board Chair.