



## **Bridgewater Junior High School (BJHS) & Verge House Transition Program (Verge House)**

### **BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council Agreement**

The purpose of this school advisory council agreement is to establish the terms of reference for the partnership between the BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council, South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE), and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) to operate a School Advisory Council (SAC) at the school level.

### **Effective date and review of the agreement**

The agreement begins when signed by all parties. The agreement shall be reviewed annually by the SAC before June 30 of each year. Any agreed-upon revisions can be made at that time and submitted to the SSRCE and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for consideration, to become effective upon approval of all partners.

### **Structure of the Council**

The Advisory Council may include the following members:

- the principal, who is a non-voting member,
- five parents/guardians
- three teachers
- two members of the school's support staff
- two students
- one community member

Names of the members of the BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council and their respective years of service are detailed in appendix A to the bylaws.

### **Decision-making process**

BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council (SAC) will make decisions in the following ways:

- All decisions will be made by consensus where possible.
- If a consensus cannot be reached, the decision will be delayed until the next meeting, which will occur within thirty days.
- If at that meeting a consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote is required of the quorum present for the proposal to be approved.
- If there is a timeline within which a decision must be reached, an emergency meeting may be called by the chair of the (SAC) prior to the deadline.
- A quorum will be established when the meeting is called to order. A quorum will consist of a minimum of eight of the voting members of the SAC and shall include a minimum of one member from each representative group. Representative groups consist of parents/guardians,



staff, students, and community members.

- In addition, the principal or designate shall be present. The vice-principal is the designate as the non-voting member.

### **School advisory council commitments**

The BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council will be responsible for:

- providing all SAC members with a voice in decision-making
- working in collaboration with the principal and participating in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan
- advising the principal and the regional centre on: developing policies that promote student achievement and safe and inclusive schools; school practices and initiatives; communication among the school, parents and community; any matters that are referred to the school advisory council by the principal, the regional centre or the Minister
- developing strategies to improve and support the extracurricular programs and special projects of the school
- maintaining effective communication with parents/guardians by holding regular public meetings and making copies of agendas and minutes available upon request
- advising the principal and staff on any matters that are referred to the school advisory council by the principal, the regional centre or the Minister
- in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, determining priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council
- advising the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development or the Provincial Advisory Council on policy and other educational matters.
- preparing an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister.

### **South Shore Regional Centre for Education commitments**

SSRCE will provide the following support to BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council:

- orientation and in-service sessions for council members, and workshops on special topics upon request
- a facilitator to assist the school council as required
- feedback to the council on the school improvement plan and the annual report
- opportunities to give input on regional centre for education policies and procedures
- meetings between the regional executive director of education or designate and the school advisory council upon request
- make available copies of policies via the SSRCE's website
- responding to advice/questions from the school advisory council
- mediation services when there is unresolved conflict between the school advisory council and the principal



**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commitments**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will support BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council by:

- developing educational materials to assist school advisory councils in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities
- providing opportunities to give input on provincial policies and any other matters referred to the SAC by the Minister
- providing mediation when there is unresolved conflict between the school advisory council and the regional centre for education
- organizing and/or supporting professional development opportunities for council members
- providing funds to support the mandate of the school advisory council

**Parties to the agreement**

We, the undersigned, understand and agree to follow through on the commitments made in this school advisory council agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
SSRCE Regional Executive Director of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **Bridgewater Junior High School (BJHS) & Verge House Transition Program (Verge House)**

### **School Advisory Council Bylaws**

#### **Membership**

The BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council will have fifteen voting members which shall include:

- five parents/guardians;
- three teachers;
- two support staff members;
- two students;
- one community member

- and the principal.

The principal (or designate) is a permanent, non-voting member.

#### **Eligibility for membership**

##### ***Parents/guardians***

- must have a child at BJHS & Verge House and cannot be a South Shore Regional Centre for Education (SSRCE) employee on staff at BJHS & Verge House

##### ***Teachers***

- must be a teacher on staff at BJHS & Verge House

##### ***Support staff***

- must be on the support staff at BJHS & Verge House (e.g. administrative assistant, teacher assistant, duty aides, caretakers, cafeteria workers, bus drivers)

##### ***Students***

- may include the Student Council president or vice president and a grade seven, eight or nine student elected through an in-school election.

##### ***Community member***

- must not be an employee of BJHS or Verge House;
- must not have children registered at BJHS and/or Verge House;
- must reside in the geographical area served by BJHS and/or Verge House or provide a service to or within the geographical area served by BJHS and/or Verge House;



### **Elections and appointments**

Elections will be held in September and are usually by secret ballot. Appointments of community members will occur prior to the October meeting.

#### ***Parents/guardians***

A call for nominations may be made during the first two weeks of September through the school website, newsletters sent home with children, and/or the Home and School Association, with a day designated for voting in late September. Nominations will close one week prior to a duly advertised voting day. Nominations will be received by the school principal and forwarded to the school advisory council chair. Election will be by a simple majority vote of eligible parents/guardians on a designated voting day. Those unable to vote on that day can contact the school to make arrangements to vote prior to the voting day. The principal and chair will appoint three individuals to act as scrutineers to count the vote.

Eligible parents/guardians are those who have children enrolled in BJHS & Verge House. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will be organized.

#### ***Teachers and support staff***

Teachers and support staff will elect/choose their own representatives in September by the method of their choice.

#### ***Students***

The student council will select either the President or Vice President to sit on the SAC. The second student representative will be a student from grades seven to nine elected through an in-school process from among the grade nine student body.

#### ***Community member***

The community member(s) will be appointed to the school advisory council by the SAC prior to the October meeting so that the executive can be selected. The position(s) will be advertised on the school website and may be advertised in the local newspaper. All applicants may be asked to submit, in writing, a brief resume and a letter which explains why the applicant is interested in being on the school advisory council.



### Terms of service

Terms of service for each representative group are the following:

- Parents/guardians are elected for a term of three years. Parents/guardian selected or appointed to fill a vacancy are elected or appointed for the remainder of the term.
- Student representatives are elected/chosen for a term of one year.
- Teachers and support staff are elected/chosen from their respective group for a term of three years. Teachers and support staff elected or appointed to fill a vacancy are elected or appointed for the remainder of the term.
- Community members are appointed for a term of two years. Community members appointed to fill a vacancy are appointed for the remainder of the term.
- All members can re-offer for election or appointment to the SAC at the end of their term, to a maximum of three consecutive terms.
- The principal position is permanent.
- A council member elected to an executive position may serve in that position for a maximum of two consecutive one-year terms.

### Vacancies

Should a vacancy arise, it will be addressed as follows:

- Vacancies on the SAC will be filled from the relevant membership group.
- Vacancies of less than six months may be filled by school advisory council appointment.
- Vacancies of longer than six months will be filled according to the by laws governing elections or appointment of the appropriate membership groups to fill the remainder of the vacated term.

### Executive

The executive will consist of a chair, vice chair, secretary, and principal. The selection of the chair, vice chair and secretary will be done annually at the October meeting. The chair, vice chair and secretary will be selected from those school advisory council members other than the principal and will serve no more than two consecutive years as chair, vice chair or secretary.

### Agenda and meeting summary

The chair will draw up the meeting agenda in consultation with the principal five days prior to each meeting. Copies of the agenda will be distributed to each member by email, along with any other information that is relevant to the agenda items. Agendas from each meeting will be kept in BJHS's records, in either print or electronic format. Agendas will be made available to the public upon request and posted on the school website.

The secretary will prepare a meeting summary for each school advisory council meeting, which will include highlights of key decisions and actions. Once approved at the subsequent meeting, the meeting summaries will be given to the principal of BJHS to be included in the school record in either print or electronic format. Meeting summaries will be made available to the public upon request and posted on the school website.



## Meetings

Meetings will be conducted according to the following guidelines:

- A regular meeting schedule will be determined at the initial meeting of the school year with a minimum of four meetings annually. Additional meetings may be scheduled as determined by the BJHS & Verge House SAC. Meetings will be a maximum of 90 minutes in length unless the SAC agrees by consensus to go longer.
- Members of the public who wish to address the school advisory council are asked to inform the SAC through the chair or the school principal in writing at least one week prior to the school advisory council meeting. They may address the meeting at the discretion of the chair.
- Agendas will allow for a ten-minute period for input on the agenda items from the public in attendance at the council meeting.
- Members who are not able to attend a meeting will notify the school advisory council secretary or the school advisory council chair by noon of the meeting date.
- Any member absent without cause for three consecutive meetings will be considered to have vacated their position. Vacancies will be filled as per these bylaws.

## Quorum

A quorum will be established when the meeting is called to order. A quorum will consist of a minimum of half plus one (eight) of the SAC voting members present and shall include a minimum of one representative from each representative group. Representative groups consist of parents/ guardians, staff, students and community members. In addition, the principal or the designate (vice principal) shall be present and are non-voting.

## Decision-making process

The following principles and procedures will be used in making decisions:

### Principles

- All council members are responsible for making decisions that ensure the best education possible for our students.
- All council members will have the opportunity to participate in decision-making.
- Council decisions will be by consensus whenever possible.

### Procedures

- Agenda items will be discussed in a structured way prior to a decision.
- When background information is needed on an agenda item, the principal will provide council members with that information and the time required to review it in advance of a decision.
- Whenever possible, decisions will be made by consensus.
- If consensus cannot be reached, the decision can be delayed until the following meeting, which must occur within 30 days. If at that time consensus cannot be reached, a majority vote will be required of those members present.
- Decisions and recommendations will be recorded in the minutes of meetings.



### **School improvement plan and annual report**

The school improvement plan for BJHS & Verge House will be developed by the principal and staff of the school and shared with the SAC. The SAC will work in collaboration with the principal and participate in efforts to improve student achievement and student and community well-being by regularly receiving information on the school improvement plan and monitoring progress and improvements under the plan. In addition, in accordance with the terms of the school advisory council agreement, the SAC will determine priorities for spending the funds allocated to support the mandate of the school advisory council including student achievement and report annually on the expenditures of funds to the Minister. The SAC will prepare an annual report in the form and containing the information determined by the Minister. The report will be presented at the June SAC meeting and then submitted to the regional centre for education by the end of June.

### **Adopting and amending bylaws**

A notice of motion, given one meeting in advance, is required to amend the bylaws. Bylaws will be amended following the established decision-making process. The amended bylaws will be forwarded to the regional executive director for approval, and the bylaws or amendments become effective upon receipt of this approval.

### **Parties to the agreement**

We, the undersigned, understand and agree to follow these Bylaws.

\_\_\_\_\_  
BJHS & Verge House School Advisory Council Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
SSRCE Regional Executive Director of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date