



SAC Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 · 6:00 – 7:00 pm · Google Meet

Attendees:

Heather Napoli, Chair - Parent Representative (2024-2027)
Liz Hallett, Vice-Chair - Parent Representative (2024-2027)
Lauren Bowes, Secretary - Support Staff Representative (2025-2026)
Wendi Tekamp – Principal (2025-2026)
Melanie Connors Blades - Teacher Representative (2025-2026)

Regrets:

Shelley Mills – Community Representative (2025-2027)

Approval of Minutes for Previous Meeting

Heather Napoli motioned to approve the minutes from the November 4, 2025 meeting; Lauren Bowes seconded the motion. No changes were indicated in discussion. Heather Napoli, Liz Hallett, Lauren Bowes, and Melanie Connors Blades voted during the meeting. Shelley Mills voted via email. All in favor.

Bylaw Update Discussion

Liz Hallett reported on email voting based on information received from the SAC Provincial Conference, which she attended with Wendi Tekamp in November. Email voting is only allowed where the SAC Bylaws allow for email voting. ESM SAC Bylaws do not currently indicate a provision for email voting. Lauren Bowes noted that due to the bylaw provision, quorum is only achieved when a member of each representative group is in attendance, email voting is crucial to completing the business of SAC in a timely manner. There is only one member from the Teaching Staff, Support Staff, and Community on the SAC, so if any of those members is absent, the ESM SAC does not meet quorum. We have met quorum only once this school year. A bylaw amendment for adding members to the SAC as a possible solution to the quorum problem was also discussed. Heather Napoli will look into this. The decision was made to continue with business as usual and allow for email voting for this meeting.

Funding Request

Principal Wendi Tekamp requested \$1036.40 to be allocated from SAC funds to cover the cost of two (2) substitutes for two (2) days to allow teachers to collaborate and plan goals and learning outcomes for P-6 literacy in support of the school improvement plan and student achievement.

Planned scheduling: Provide upper and lower elementary teachers half day collaboration time at the beginning of both Term 2 and Term 3.

Teachers benefitted from the described collaboration time in January (Term 2) and will again in March (Term 3).

Lauren Bowes asked the question of whether the hiring of substitute teachers is considered an operational expense, of which only 20% of SAC funding can be used. Further to that was the question of operational expenses - does that pertain to ESM operational expenses or SAC operational expenses? Lauren's accounting guidelines from the HRCE are worded in such a way that she is led to believe that it pertains to ESM operational expenses. Guidance received by Liz Hallett at the SAC Provincial Conference indicates the 20% is for SAC operational expenses. Lauren mentioned that SAC doesn't have any operational costs, which is why she's led to believe the 20% is meant for school operations. Liz gave the example of some schools using the funds to hire babysitters for SAC members to attend meetings. Lauren noted that \$1000+ is a significant amount of money to be set aside for an SAC to spend on babysitters. The question of operational expenses is one to further explore for more clarification, but it does not apply to this situation, as the collaboration time for teachers to plan for upcoming terms fits within our School Improvement Plan, the implementation of which is a guiding principle of SAC.

Lauren Bowes motioned to approve the funding request for two (2) substitute teachers for two (2) days, a total cost to SAC of \$1036.40. Melanie Connors Blades seconded the motion. Heather Napoli, Liz Hallett, Lauren Bowes, and Melanie Connors Blades voted during the meeting. Shelley Mills voted via email. All in favor.

SAC Provincial Conference

Wendi Tekamp and Liz Hallett reported on the SAC Provincial Conference, which focused on the role of SAC as it relates to the Provincial Code of Conduct, Student Safety, Inclusion/Equity and the response to student behaviour. Student data is collected through a variety of reports, and in turn that data is used to apply predictable consequences - for example, students know "if I do abc, the consequence is xyz." The focus of consequences should be restorative rather than overly punitive, and students need explicit teaching to support positive behaviour. Discussions were had about connecting student data to the SAC mandate as well as using the SAC Grant to support the data, especially as it applies to student attendance and incident reporting.

SAC membership should reflect the needs of the student community and should be a representation of the community as a whole. Membership can vary throughout the year to better reflect your school community.

The NS School Lunch program pros and cons were discussed. The major pro of the program is that food helps students learn and thrive. While the major con centered around the abundance of both container waste and food waste seen in all schools.

Resource mapping is the process of gathering information re: the resources in your community and using those resources to help support your goals, which in the case of the SAC is the School Improvement Plan.

Safety Concerns

Heather Napoli noted safety concerns she has with rough playground behavior during unstructured time outdoors, which ESM has several times per day - morning drop off, recess, lunch, and after dismissal while waiting for the second bus to arrive for departure. Wendi Tekamp reported that a change in bussing was requested, but the complex needs of HRCE Transportation and the rural location of ESM do not allow for a change in the schedule, so ESM has employed other strategies to support student regulation, especially at the end of the day.

Valentine's Dance

Heather Napoli shared concerns voiced to her from the school community regarding the Home & School Association's Valentine Dance, held on Friday, February 13. Concerns included staffing, the date chosen, the choice to have a dance, and parking concerns.

Parking at all evening events is a safety concern as cars are parked on both sides of our already narrow driveway and are essentially blocking emergency vehicles from entering the property. Wendi Tekamp said that she is going to take this into consideration.

Lauren Bowes, who serves as a member of the Home & School Executive in addition to the SAC, responded that she didn't feel like the SAC meeting was the right venue for discussing Home & School event planning, implementation, and logistics. She noted that all families of ESM are considered members of the Home & School Association, but very few actually volunteer their time in planning/executing Home & School sponsored events. With only a few people actively volunteering, Home & School event planning is becoming increasingly exhausting, frustrating, and disheartening, and to hear so many complaints following an event adds to that frustration. Home & School meeting links are shared in the school newsletter, and a reminder is sent out to the school community via School Messenger ahead of each meeting. She encourages families to attend Home & School meetings, volunteer their time to Home & School events, and/or express their feedback directly to the Home & School Association if they have feedback on how Home & School events are being planned/executed, expressing that the only way to effect actual change is to put in the work toward a solution.

In a follow-up email to the SAC, Heather Napoli asked that it be noted in the minutes that as the Chair of the SAC, she is always open to feedback and discussion.

Sound System

There was an issue with the sound system at the Valentine's Dance, so Heather Napoli asked if this was an expense SAC needed to consider. Lauren Bowes said that someone will be coming to look at the sound board to see what's wrong with it. If it's not an easy fix, we will need to replace the system.

Principal's Report to the SAC

- The current school population is 90 students in Pre-Primary to Grade 6. We have welcomed 5 new students since January 2026, and we anticipate another new student this spring.
- **Academics**
 - **Primary-Grade 2 Literacy:** In January, our Elementary Literacy Support Teacher (ELST), Melanie Connors Blades, screened all P-2 students using Acadience, a universal screening measure recommended by the NS Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This tool is intended to quickly and accurately identify students who are not moving along in early literacy development, so that our school team can reliably identify all children who may need additional instructional opportunities or targeted research-based interventions.
 - **Primary-Grade 4 Literacy:** All primary to grade 4 students continue to receive research-based universal instruction, and teachers use the UFLI Foundations resource. Primary to grade 2 students are taught in three groups: primary, grade 1, and grade 2 scope & sequence. Grade 3/4 students are taught as a whole class.
 - **Grade 3-6 Literacy:** Some Grade 3-6 students are receiving small group instruction by our Resource Teacher. Grade 5/6 students are focussing on vocabulary development and morphology. Our ELST will continue to support

literacy instruction in the Grade 5/6 classroom through student-centered literacy coaching.

- **Primary to Grade 6:** Teachers gather a variety of evidence over the term to determine what each student knows, shows, and can do. In the coming weeks teachers will begin to share computational fluency data and evidence for all students. Each student's level of success is recorded by **identifying the grade level and term that best represents their current understanding**. This may differ from the student's enrolled grade or current reporting period. Teachers do this work so that they know the next steps of instruction for students.
- **Primary to Grade 6 Music:** During the month of February, our music specialist Jessica McInerney welcomed Halifax Regional Arts' Music Mentor James Jackson to ESM on Tuesdays. James is one of the most respected Orff educators in Canada and brings a career of experience in elementary classrooms. James' role is to mentor elementary classroom music educators who wish to explore Orff technique. I wasn't familiar with the technique but when I looked it up it resonated with what I saw during the classes: the joy of music making with children.
- **Primary to Grade 6:** Classroom Teachers met in two sessions (Primary to Grade 2 and then Grades 3 to 6) on Tuesday January 6th, each for a half day, to identify students' challenges, and then to collaborate and plan goals and learning outcomes for their grade levels through the end of Term 2. The teams, which included myself and our Resource/Learning Centre Teacher, reviewed curriculum documents, identified high leverage goals for instruction based on where the students were in their learning. The support by SAC to fund the substitute teachers to allow for teacher collaboration is so appreciated by the teaching staff and by myself. The teachers left the sessions feeling that the time was productive and that what they developed in their session was ready to implement in the classroom.
- **Upcoming Programming**
 - Colleen Cavanaugh, Learning Centre Teacher, will receive STAR professional development at the HRCE Board Office in February, STAR is Strategies for Teaching Based on Autism Research.
 - Melanie Connors Blades will receive First Aid recertification in March to ensure that ESM meets the minimum standards for First Aid certified staff onsite.
 - In celebration of African Heritage Month, Wayn Hamilton and his African dance/drum troupe will visit ESM on Friday, February 27th to deliver drumming and dancing programming to all classes.
 - Our 3rd and final Student and Family Skate at SMC is scheduled for Friday March 6th.
 - Our 3rd and final Swim to Survive session will need to be rescheduled once again due to today's school closure.
- **Maintenance and Safety**
 - Lockdown drill was successfully completed last week.
 - You may have noticed that our shed is no longer and has been replaced with a Seacan, gratitude goes to Coastal Restoration & Masonry for the donation, installation, and removal of the old shed.
 - Some concerns about our sound system and we are exploring if fixes can be made or if we may need to consider a new sound system. Possible request to SAC for funding to do so if a new system is needed.
 - There have been ongoing conversations about student safety during unstructured times and on the bus. Teaching around school norms is daily work for staff. Conversations with students, staff, and families are ongoing as we work to ensure safety for all. Some factors that can impact student behavior may include disruption to school schedule/routines (snow days) and staff absences, either

expected or unexpected, resulting in new substitute staff in the building. For now, I have added one additional lunch monitor each day with another additional lunch monitor 1-2 days each week.

- As we work with each and every student we work to support their understanding of their actions, their impact, and acceptable school norms. Conferencing with parents/guardians and students is a regular part of my protocol to help home also understand the norms of school.
- **Well-Being**
 - One of the positives of a smaller school is the ability for students to engage in cross-age play. Bus students continue to take part in cross-age play outside every morning until the 8:20 am bell. Social connections amongst students, student check-ins by teachers on duty, fresh air, and a soft start to the school day benefit our learners. Teachers use this chunk of time to set up learning for the day.
 - Outside lunch play has truly been quite amazing with all of the snow this winter. Students have been engaged in heavy work during outside play time, including fort building, digging, sliding and sledding. No doubt this is very good work to get their bodies ready for learning when returning to the classroom.

******* The following portion of the Principal's Report to SAC was not shared to the group due to technical issues, but it is important to note:**

- **Well-Being (continued)**
 - Staff continue to lead clubs for our students. Ms. Cuvelier runs a baking club, Ms. Harding & Ms. Lauren are running a drama club. These clubs provide high interest based activities for students to connect and collaborate in new ways across grades and to participate in the school community.
- **Staffing**
 - A posting for an additional 50% EPA Term closed on Monday. Interviews are forthcoming.
 - DJ Grant, Physical Education Teacher, is off on leave until late March. He welcomed a new daughter in February. Mr. Stuart Quigley will be teaching physical education in DJ's absence.
- **Student Success Planning - Cycle 2**
 - Literacy: Focus on writing workshop and teaching writing skills and strategies.
 - Math: Continued professional learning and collaboration to understand the success criteria for computational fluency and gather evidence aligned with clear learning goals.
 - Well-being: The goal is tied to student understanding of shared norms and expectations throughout the school building based on the explicit teaching and practice of behaviors specified by the school matrix.
- **School Lunch Program**
 - Our Lead Cafeteria Worker was hired in December, and we have transitioned to phase 2 where meals are prepared/delivered to ESM daily by a Lead Cafeteria Worker using the Crow's Nest location to cook meals. Hot lunches have been quite tasty.

Innovation Grant

- Tabled due to time restriction.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:06 PM.