



School Advisory Commission Responsibilities

Church governance can be understood as a ministry. It is a ministry that serves the people of God by helping them maintain order to promote and protect the rights and obligations needed to carry out the mission Jesus gave to his church. Those who serve as ministers of governance have a distinct and unique responsibility to see that the rights and duties of individuals are affirmed within the institution and community of the church. Governance in itself is a means of exercising rights and responsibilities in the service of others and in the service of one's own growth as a member of Christ.

- A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church

The Code of Canon Law provides a framework for parish and school governance. Two key principles serve as foundational to the understanding and efficiency of school governance.

The School Advisory Commission (SAC) exists as a permanent commission of the Pastoral Council.

- The **Principle of Subsidiarity** states that which can be accomplished by the initiatives and industry of one group should not be assumed by a higher organization or authority (*A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*).
 - The SAC is an advisory body. As such, the SAC may make recommendations to the pastor, but the SAC has no final decision-making authority.
 - The Pastoral Council does not approve or veto recommendations of the SAC to the pastor.
- The **Principle of Collaboration** states that the development of effective governance depends on the ability of people individually and collectively to work together (*A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*). Liaisons should be used to facilitate this collaboration:
 - Pastoral Council provides a liaison to the SAC
 - The SAC may provide liaisons to Finance Council, Personnel Committee, and Buildings & Grounds Committee
- The SAC uses **Operational Norms** to outline and guide its functions.

Purpose of the School Advisory Commission:

- Assist leadership in ensuring that the school will thrive and remain viable for the future
- Assist leadership in ensuring excellence in
 - Catholic Culture
 - Academics
 - Whole Child Education
 - Stewardship of Resources
- Support the school in its efforts to collaborate with the parish

The Foundation:

- *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Catholic Schools*
- Describe how the most mission-driven, program effective, well managed, and responsibly governed Catholic schools operate.
- Foundation of schools' accreditation process
- Foundation of frameworks for the growth and evaluation of principals and teachers.

Defining Characteristics:

1. Centered in the Person of Jesus Christ
2. Contributing to the Evangelizing Mission of the Church
3. Distinguished by Excellence
4. Committed to Educate the Whole Child
5. Steeped in a Catholic Worldview
6. Sustained by Gospel Witness
7. Shaped by Communion and Community
8. Accessible to All Students
9. Established by the Expressed Authority of the Bishop

Domains:

1. Mission and Catholic Identity
2. Governance and Leadership
3. Academic Excellence
4. Operational Vitality

Responsibilities of the School Advisory Commission:

Mission and Governance:

- Identification, recruitment, and vetting of potential SAC members
- Commission orientation, training, development, and evaluation
- Fidelity to mission and vision

The SAC and principal share the responsibility for recommending candidates to the pastor for service on the SAC.

The SAC and principal share the responsibility for the orientation and training of new members, development of all members, and the evaluation of the commission in relation to its Operational Norms and defined responsibilities.

The SAC, in collaboration with the principal, provide general oversight to ensure the school maintains fidelity to its stated vision and mission.

Whole Child Education:

- Rooted in the conviction that human beings have a transcendent destiny
- Education for the whole person must form the spiritual, intellectual, physical, psychological, social, moral, aesthetic and religious capacities of each child. (*NSBECS*)
- Academic excellence for all students

The principal is responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of academic, co-curricular, faith-formation, and service/ministry programs to educate the whole child in all these dimensions.

The SAC should ensure adequate resources are available to implement the necessary programming.

Institutional Advancement:

- Development: identification, cultivation, and procurement of third-source funding
- Marketing and Public Relations: activities to create, build, and maintain relationships with constituencies
- Enrollment Management: recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students

The principal is responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of enrollment and retention policies and procedures.

The SAC and principal share the responsibility for the development, implementation, and evaluation of development, marketing and public relations, and recruitment strategies.

The SAC should ensure adequate resources are available to implement the development, marketing and public relations, and enrollment management strategies.

Finance:

- School budget and long-term forecasts
- School personnel compensation package
- School income
 - Parish Investment
 - Tuition
 - Third-source Funding

The principal is responsible for implementing and monitoring the current-year budget and for keeping the SAC informed on the current-year budget.

The SAC and principal, in collaboration with appropriate parish personnel, share the responsibility for proposing a school budget to the pastor for the following fiscal year. This should include realistic recommendations for school personnel compensation increases, tuition rates, and third-source funding.

Long-Range Planning:

Strategic Planning:

- Definition: Organizational management activity used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, ensure all are working toward common goals, and assess the organization's direction in a changing environment (*Balanced Scorecard Institute*)
- School strategic planning is part of parish-wide strategic planning and should not be done in isolation.

The SAC and principal share the responsibility for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the strategic plan.

School Improvement Planning:

- A specific plan for each of the four domains of the *National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Catholic Schools* is required for accreditation.

The principal is responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the School Improvement Plan.

The SAC should ensure adequate resources are available to implement the action plan for each goal.

Facilities and Technology:

- Maintenance and upkeep of facility and technology infrastructure
- Short- and long-term capital facility needs and technology infrastructure needs

The principal, in collaboration with appropriate parish personnel, is responsible for the day-to-day facility and technology infrastructure needs of the school.

The SAC and principal, in collaboration with appropriate parish personnel, share the responsibility for proposing short- and long-term facility and technology infrastructure projects to the pastor.

The SAC should ensure adequate resources are available to meet the day-to-day facility and technology infrastructure needs of the school.

Policy:

- A general statement regarding a school-related principle, norm, or expected action.
- A directive that leaves room for administrative (the school principal's) discretion.

The Archdiocese of Milwaukee *Parish and School Policy Manual* establishes the essential policies and directives for schools.

The SAC, in collaboration with the school principal, may propose local policy that is more prescriptive, but any proposed policy may not in any way conflict with, or supersede, archdiocesan policy. **Proposed**

policies require the approval of the pastor. The Pastoral Council does not approve proposed policy (Principle of Subsidiarity).

It is the responsibility of the school principal to develop administrative regulations and procedures to implement all policies. This may be done in collaboration with the SAC.

The SAC, in collaboration with the school principal, should develop a system to monitor the implementation of, adherence to, and effectiveness of all relevant policies.

Policy	
Can do:	Cannot do:
Give general direction to the administration	Control or supervise administration
Anticipate and forestall crisis	Resolve specific problems after the fact
Clarify expectations for students, parents, teachers, and others	Address isolated cases or petty items
Codify and preserve the SAC's decisions	Substitute for programs
Reduce subjectivity, inconsistency and arbitrariness	

- **Examples of areas where SAC may develop local policy for recommendation to the pastor:**
 - Tuition Collection Policy and Process
 - Employee use of technology for personal business
 - Athletic eligibility (if school-based athletic program)
 - Percentage of students admitted through Wisconsin Parental Choice Programs
 - School calendar and length (number of days) of teacher contracts – may be not be less than what is defined in *Parish and School Policy Manual*.

- **Examples of areas where the principal has the authority to establish processes and procedures:**
 - Arrival and dismissal process
 - Assessment, grading, and reporting practices
 - Teacher / staff evaluations
 - Student discipline

Emergency Operations Plan:

- Required by state statute (Act 143)
- Guidelines and procedures to address: school violence attacks, fires, weather-related emergencies, bomb threats, intruders, threats to nonclassroom events, and parent-student reunification
- Needs to be in collaboration with parish EOP

The SAC and principal, in collaboration with appropriate parish personnel, local first responders, and appropriate community members, share the responsibility for developing, implementing, training, evaluating, and adapting EOP.

The principal is responsible for ensuring required documentation regarding the EOP is submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Justice as required by statute.

The SAC should ensure adequate resources are available to meet the requirements of the EOP.

Principal Search, Selection, and Evaluation:

The SAC, or selected members, may be asked to participate in the search and selection process for a new principal. The pastor hires the principal.

The pastor has the responsibility for the evaluation of the principal. This responsibility cannot be delegated. However, the pastor may request input from the SAC regarding its working relationship with the principal.

Areas where the School Advisory Commission should not be involved:

- Day-to-day operations of the school
- Student discipline
- Parent complaints
 - SAC members need to remind parents of the established procedure to raise concerns. This would normally start with the teacher, move to the principal, and then to the pastor if necessary.
- Teacher complaints
 - There is an established grievance procedure for teachers and staff to use.
- Issues related to employment or evaluation of school/parish personnel
- Evaluation of the principal
 - Note: the supervision / evaluation of the principal is the sole responsibility of the pastor / parish director. The pastor / parish director may seek input from the SAC regarding the principal's working relationship with it.

Possible subcommittees of the School Advisory Commission:

- Home & School
- Athletics (school-based)

- Institutional Advancement
 - Development
 - Marketing
- Strategic Planning
- Facilities & Technology
- Finance

Effective Principal – School Advisory Commission relationship:

- The school vision and mission is understood by all and is the foundation for all SAC business.
- The roles and responsibilities of the SAC, principal, and pastor / parish director are understood and respected by all parties.
 - There is an annual orientation for all SAC members.
- The principal and SAC work together to establish procedures by which the SAC can fulfill its roles and responsibilities.
- The principal views the SAC as an integral part of the school community and uses the SAC as a consultative body to further the mission of the school.
- The principal and SAC engage in open, honest discourse at meetings, and ***once a decision or course of action has been reached, all parties present a unified front to the community.***
- There is intentional, continual SAC formation and succession planning.

School Advisory Commission Membership:

Members are discerned or elected and approved by the pastor.

- Ex Officio Members (non-voting):
 - Pastor
 - Principal
 - Pastoral Council Liaison
 - Home & School Committee Chair (optional)
 - Athletic Committee Chair (if school-based; optional)
- Members: 5 – 9
 - Parishioners supportive of Catholic schools and / or possessing a specific area of expertise.
 - Community members supportive of Catholic schools and / or possessing a specific area of expertise.
 - Current or former parents of school students.
- Tenure:
 - Discerned or elected members serve a three-year term.
 - May serve two consecutive terms.

- Officers:
 - Must be a discerned or elected member.
 - Elected by majority vote of commission subject to approval by pastor.
 - Tenure: one year. May serve a maximum of two consecutive terms in any given office.
 - Officer Positions:
 - Chair
 - Vice-Chair
 - Secretary

Sources:

Archdiocese of Milwaukee – *Parish and School Policy Manual* – Policies 1210, 2103, 2205, 2210; *Parish Commissions & Committees Manual* – p. 31, 32

Archdiocese of Indianapolis – *Catholic School Commission and Board Guide*

Archdiocese of Portland – *School Advisory Council Primer*

Diocese of Crookston – *School Advisory Council Inservice*

Archdiocese of Newark - *Local School Advisory Board: Lighting the Way – Building a New Era in Catholic Education*

Archdiocese of Louisville – *The Roles and Responsibilities of Advisory Board Members*