

PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE (PSSC) HANDBOOK

Anglophone School Districts Province of New Brunswick

2 October 2024

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Parent School Support Committee (PSSC) Handbook!

This handbook was created by the District Education Councils (DECs) of the Anglophone Sector in the province to provide general information to individuals joining a Parent School Support Committee (PSSC). It highlights the roles, responsibilities, meeting guidelines, and how PSSCs collaborate with school administration to enhance student achievement. More detailed information can be found in the resource documents.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
NB EDUCATION SYSTEM	3
EECD MISSION STATEMENT	4
PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE	5
DUTIES OF THE PSSC	6
LIMITATIONS ON PSSC	6
PSSC ROLES	7
PSSC MEETINGS	8
PSSC ANNUAL CYCLE	9
PSSC BUDGETS	10
Appendix A - DUTIES OF THE PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE	11
(Education Act, Section 33)	11
Appendix B - GUIDELINES ON MEETING MINUTES	12
Appendix C - MAKING MEETINGS EFFECTIVE	13
Appendix D - SCHOOL PLAN	14
Appendix E - CODE OF CONDUCT	16
Conflict Resolution	16
Appendix F - ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY	17
Appendix G - PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE DECLARATION FORM	18
Appendix H - RESOURCES	19

NB EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are four school districts within the Anglophone Sector of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). They are Anglophone North School District (ASD-N), Anglophone South School District (ASD-S), Anglophone East School District (ASD-E) and Anglophone West School District (ASD-W).



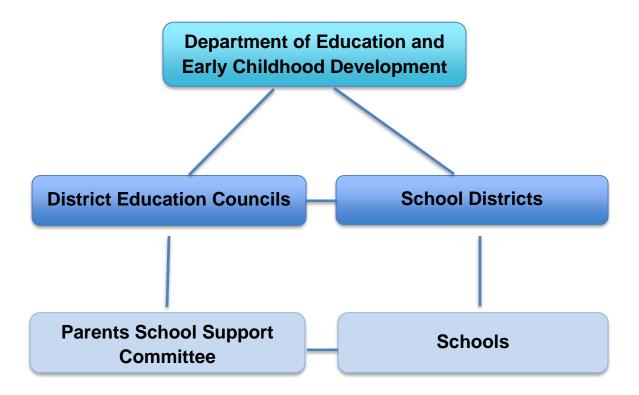
EECD: The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development sets the provincial standards and expectations for achievement.

DECs: District Education Councils ensure that the Districts operate effectively and efficiently and reflect community desires and needs. They operate under a 'policy governance' model. DEC Councillors will attend PSSC meetings, according to internal policies, to establish the vital link between the DECs and the parents, guardians and the school community.

PSSC: A Parent School Support Committee shall be established for each school in the province (Education Act, Section 32(1)). The PSSC will be composed of parents, guardians and community members with an interest in supporting and improving the education of all students through the establishment of a safe and welcoming learning environment.

School District: Each school district has a Superintendent. The Superintendent is the sole employee of their respective DECs. They are the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of their districts and thus are responsible for all other employees of the district as well as all operational matters.

Schools: Each school is run by the Principal who is the educational leader and administrator responsible for the school, teachers and school employees. They are the de facto CEO of the school and responsible for all operational school-based matters. The Principal is accountable to the Superintendent (not the PSSC) and must oversee the educational progress of students in the school.



EECD MISSION STATEMENT

The mission for New Brunswick public schools is to have each student develop the attributes needed to be a lifelong learner, to achieve personal fulfillment and to contribute to a productive, just and democratic society.

This is the overall mission that guides all aspects of the New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Districts, and the schools. It is important that all of the partners in education work together towards this goal.

Each District and School will have their own mission statements that will help further focus the work of the PSSC.

PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE

The Parent School Support Committee (PSSC) is a group of parents, guardians and community members who work in an encouraging, advisory, and collaborative fashion with the School Principal and staff to ensure the best possible learning opportunities for students at their school.

Being involved with the PSSC allows you, as a parent or guardian, the opportunity to have an impact and influence in what goes on at your child's school. It also demonstrates to your child an interest in their schooling and in your community.

Committee Size: A Parent School Support Committee shall have no fewer than six and no more than twelve members, the exact number of which shall be determined in accordance with such guidelines as may be established by the District Education Council concerned (Education Act, Section 32(2)). The underlined portion of the previous sentence provides the DEC with the latitude to address either an abundance or paucity of volunteers to form a PSSC, which may occur from time to time in both rural and urban centres of the districts.

Election of PSSC Members: All Parent School Support Committee elections shall be conducted between the opening day of school and the thirtieth day of September, inclusive, of each school year. Principals are responsible for advising the school community of the date, time and location of the elections and for ensuring that elections are conducted according to the election process and procedures and for handling the administrative functions related to the PSSC election. Only eligible parents are entitled to vote in a Parent School Support Committee election. Details regarding PSSC elections (eligibility, nominations, complaints, vacancies etc) can be found in Regulation 2001-48.

Committee Members: The majority of the members of a Parent School Support Committee shall be parents of pupils enrolled in the school or persons nominated by parents of pupils enrolled in the school as representatives of those parents. Individuals are elected for a three-year term. They may be subsequently elected for a second term should they desire and vacancies exist. Employees at the school, except for the teacher representative, may not serve on the PSSC.

Other members of the PSSC include the following:

- One teacher is elected by colleagues at the school to serve for one year.
- A student in a high school shall be elected by their peers to serve on the PSSC for a one-year period.
- In a school where no high school programme is provided, the PSSC may appoint a student as a member of the Committee for one year.
- If there is a Home and School Association at the school, they may appoint one of their members, who is the parent or guardian of a pupil at the school, to the PSSC. The term is for one year.
- Following the election, the parent members of the PSSC may appoint up to two community members to serve on the PSSC for one year.

<u>Note:</u> The <u>members</u> of the PSSC participate in all meetings and every member has the right to vote and participate in all discussion and decisions.

Non-member Participants in the PSSC:

<u>Principal:</u> The Principal is not a member and does not vote; however they or a representative must attend and participate in the PSSC meetings (Education Act, Section 32(8)).

<u>District Education Council Members:</u> As mentioned previously, a member of the District Education Council may attend and participate in any PSSC meeting however, they do not have voting rights. While Councillors, once elected, represent the interests of the whole district, administratively, DECs may allocate schools within Sub-districts to the Councillor who resides in that area. Where vacancies exist on a Council, Councillors from other locations may be requested to maintain contact with a PSSC.

DUTIES OF THE PSSC

The PSSC assists the Principal in an advisory role. The committee addresses the broad issues related to the education of all students in the school, with the goal of enhancing student learning. Primarily these issues arise from input, discussions, study and monitoring of the school plan. This includes helping the school by advising on which aspects of learning that need to be improved; the priority of those identified learning areas; and strategies/actions that focus on those areas. A detailed list of PSSC duties is at Appendix A.

LIMITATIONS ON PSSC

PSSC members have a great deal of responsibility and are valued for their contributions on many issues. However, there are some key limitations to their influence. The PSSC does not provide supervision or oversight of the Principal but they must work collaboratively to achieve success for the school body. The Principal is not bound by the wishes of the PSSC but must consider their input in determining the best course of action. They do not evaluate the Principal's overall performance but may be asked by the Superintendent to provide input specifically on the Principal's involvement with PSSC.

The following items are outside the role of the PSSC and should not be the topic of discussion at PSSC meetings:

- **Teacher and Staff issues:** PSSCs are not involved in hiring, evaluating or human resources issues related to teaching staff.
- Individual student behaviour or academic issues: Individual student issues are not the responsibility of the PSSC. Parents/guardians should first speak with their child's teacher. If the problem is not resolved, they should meet with the Principal and if necessary, the matter could be directed to a member of the district office leadership staff.
- **Day-to-day operations:** The PSSC does not manage day-to-day operations which are the responsibility of the Principal, including finances and human resources / personnel issues.

 Fundraising: Individual members may participate and support the activities of the students or the Home and School Association, but the PSSC does not use their time or resources for fundraising.

PSSC ROLES

Everyone has a part to play in ensuring the PSSC meets their goals and responsibilities.

Chair: In October of each year, the PSSC must appoint one parent member to serve as the Chair of the committee. The PSSC may also choose a Vice-Chair from among the parent members to lead the meetings when the Chair is unable to fulfill this role. Note that while the Principal attends and participates in PSSC meetings, the meetings are conducted by the Chair. The Chair:

- Sets the meeting dates, times, and agenda in collaboration with the Principal, and in consultation with PSSC members;
- Stimulates discussion by asking questions, encouraging quiet members to participate;
- Keeps to the agenda by setting and keeping time limits for discussions if necessary;
- Helps members reach consensus or calls for a vote if necessary;
- Helps to resolve conflicts; and
- Ensures PSSC minutes are maintained and distributed.

PSSC Members: All PSSC members are expected to:

- Participate in all meetings,
- Maintain high ethical standards and respect for other members,
- Respect the majority decision,
- Work collectively towards improving student learning and achievement,
- Limit discussions to matters of the school as a whole; do not discuss individual or personnel issues,
- Resolve issues in the best interest of all students and the whole school,
- Build a positive school environment,
- Support an open communication process,
- Create and encourage successful relationships and support between parents, teachers, students, staff and the community, and
- Annually elect, or appoint by consensus, a chair, vice-chair and secretary from among the parent members.

Principal: While not a 'member' of the PSSC, the Principal has a role to play in the successful functioning of the PSSC. The Principal:

- Ensures the establishment of PSSC,
- Works with the PSSC Chair to set meeting agendas;
- Seeks input and advice on areas related to PSSC responsibility;

- Coordinates advice given by the PSSC with input from school staff to make decisions in the best interest of all students to improve student learning;
- Facilitates the operation of PSSC by promoting and encouraging collaborative relationships;
- Acts as a resource on school legislation, regulations, policies, and collective agreements;
- Provides school and district information (School Plan, Monitoring reports, School Profile, Report Cards, Policies, School Performance Report);
- Keeps a copy of minutes of each PSSC meeting; and
- Assists the PSSC in communicating with the school community.

PSSC MEETINGS

PSSC meetings are open to the public. Parents and interested community members are encouraged to attend to observe the meetings.

There should be at least six PSSC meetings during the school year. The PSSC Chair and the Principal, in consultation with the members of the PSSC, may increase that number.

Meeting times, dates, location and agendas should be publicized and widely distributed within the school community. Once the meeting schedule is established, the PCCS Chair or Principal should inform the assigned DEC Councillor so that they may attend the meetings.

The only time a PSSC meeting can be held in-camera (no public attendance) is when personnel issues are discussed. As the PSSC's role in staffing is limited, this will generally only be used for discussions around the Superintendent's request for input into the Principal's evaluation.

School staff members, other than the Principal and teacher member, are able to attend but may only observe and participate as a member of the public and can comment only when called upon or when public comments are permitted.

Observers cannot participate in the discussion or raise issues for discussion unless they have specifically requested to be on the agenda and their matter is within the scope of the PSSC responsibilities.

Key Meeting Terms

Agenda: A carefully planned and organized agenda is the foundation of a successful meeting. Agenda items may come from any PSSC member. Members should receive the agenda several days before the meeting where possible. The PSSC is not required to use a specific format.

Consensus: When the PSSC has to make a decision, the topic is introduced by the Chair. Any member can make a motion proposing an outcome or action. The motion must be supported by another member who will "second" the motion. The Chair will then ask for discussion on the proposed action. The goal of the discussion should be to build consensus, and this may require some amendments to the original motion.

Building consensus ensures all members have an effective voice and helps identify areas of agreement while allowing for flexibility in arriving at solutions. It can lead to better informed,

more creative, balanced, and enduring decisions. Achieving consensus means finding the highest level of agreement without dividing members into factions.

Although they may differ on some aspects of the decision, the PSSC members agree that the overall decision best meets everyone's needs, and members support it on that basis.

Majority Vote: If consensus cannot be reached, a vote is held. The Chair will call for a vote on the motion. Voting is by show of hands. All members should vote unless excused by the Chair for conflict of interest. Silence is consent; if you choose not to vote you are agreeing to go along with the decision made by the majority. The majority vote rules and is the decision of the PSSC.

Meeting Minutes: Minutes are to be kept for each meeting and included in the school's official records. All minutes are public documents and should be made accessible within the school, on the school website or other digital platforms as determined by the District. A copy of the minutes of each PSSC meeting must be forwarded to the District Education Council through the Superintendent. Guidelines on minutes are at Appendix B.

Quorum: A PSSC can only make decisions at an official meeting with a quorum present. A quorum means that there are a majority of members present – 50% plus one. The quorum for the PSSC is determined at the start of the school year with the establishment of the PSSC membership numbers. It is important to remember that the Principal or their representative must also be present for a PSSC meeting to be held but does not count towards quorum as they are not a 'member'. This is also true of DEC Members.

Note: Robert's Rules of Order is an excellent resource / guide regarding meeting procedures.

PSSC ANNUAL CYCLE

There will be a variety of items for information, discussion and input during PSSC meetings throughout the school year. Many topics will appear regularly, while others will follow a pattern. Every school and its environment are unique and there will always be variations in how the PSSC carries out their responsibilities. The general sequence of events for most schools will be as follows:

- Early Fall: The Principal presents the School Profile, identifying resources available, and data on how well processes from the previous year have been completed. The Principal may provide an update on the School Plan of the previous school year as well as present the plan for the current year. The PSSC members should expect updates on the plan throughout the year.
- Late Fall: The Principal presents data from student surveys as well as initial data on report cards, identifying student learning and achievement as well as areas of concern.
- **Early Winter:** The Principal uses the information from the Provincial Assessments to compare the school's results with those of the District and Province.

- Mid-Winter: The School Plan is reviewed to determine if any of the strategies need to be
 modified. The Principal seeks advice from the PSSC on direction and strategies for
 improvement in student achievement.
- Late Spring: The PSSC will be advised of the available resources for the coming school year. Ideas for the next School Plan are considered.

At the last PSSC meeting of the school year, the Principal presents the School Plan for the PSSC to review and gives a final monitoring report for the current year.

PSSC BUDGETS

The DECs provide funding for PSSC operations. Generally, the amount of money is determined by the number of students in the school. Each DEC may use different formulas for determining the PSSC budgets within their districts.

Rather than stipulate on what the funds can be spent, which was past practice, current direction is that PSSC funds cannot be spent on the following items:

- Gifts (gift cards, gift certificates)
- Flowers
- Alcoholic beverages
- Hiring of casual staff
- Donations to outside organizations

It is understood that any purchase also needs to meet the direction of legislation and policy and be purchased through appropriate channels. The Principal provides a report to the PSSC on the budget and spending twice a year. Funds not expended by 31 March of the school year will revert to the general operating line in the district budget. Lastly, the focus of expenses by a PSSC, while allowing for remuneration of expenses to conduct meetings, should be on how to assist the implementation of the school plan.

Thank you for your commitment to improving our school communities through active involvement in PSSCs. Your participation helps to create a better educational environment for students.

Appendix A - DUTIES OF THE PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE (PSSC)

(Education Act, Section 33)

- 33(1) A Parent School Support Committee shall advise the principal of the school respecting the establishment, implementation and monitoring of the school improvement plan which may include
- (a) strategies for ensuring the language and culture of the school preserve and promote the language and culture of the official linguistic community for which the school is organized, (b) the school mission,
- (c) strategies for establishing school policies related to education, language and culture,
- (d) strategies for providing communication between the school and families residing in the area served by the school, and encouraging family involvement in the school,
- (e) strategies for establishing partnerships with the community to improve the quality of learning within the school,
- (f) strategies for developing a school climate and conditions to improve the quality of learning and teaching within the school,
- (g) strategies for establishing a positive pupil climate within the school, and
- (h) strategies for improving school property and facilitating use of the school by the community.
- 33(1.1) The Parent School Support Committee at the school shall advise the principal of the school respecting the establishment, implementation and monitoring of the positive learning and working environment plan, which may include
- (a) strategies and practices to promote respectful behaviour and a positive and inclusive social climate for all students and staff,
- (b) strategies and programs to prevent disrespectful behaviour or misconduct,
- (c) policies and practices to address disrespectful behaviour or misconduct in a timely manner and in a way that teaches and reinforces respect for other persons, and
- (d) appropriate support strategies for students participating in disrespectful behaviour and students who have been affected by the disrespectful behaviour of others.
- 33(2) A Parent School Support Committee shall
- (a) through the chair of the Parent School Support Committee, or another member designated by the Parent School Support Committee, who must be a parent of a pupil enrolled in the school, participate in the selection of the principal or any vice-principal of the school.
- (b) review the results of the school performance report,
- (c) advise the principal of the school in the development of school policies prepared in accordance with district and provincial policies,
- (d) provide, on the request of the superintendent concerned, input into any performance evaluation of the principal or any vice-principal of the school in matters relating to the duties of the Parent School Support Committee under this section, and
- (e) communicate with the District Education Council concerned with respect to matters relating to the duties of the Parent School Support Committee under this section.

Appendix B - GUIDELINES ON MEETING MINUTES

Minutes should give a clear, objective summary of what took place at the meeting; an account of group decisions and the rationale behind them, giving highlights rather than narrative accounts, and documenting motions and resolutions.

Members who were in attendance at the meeting must review and approve the minutes as an official record of the meeting. Once they have been approved, the minutes cannot be altered.

Minutes are usually taken by a recorder appointed by the PSSC members and normally include:

- Date, start and end time and place of meeting;
- Kind of meeting regular or special;
- Name of the Chair;
- Names of PSSC members in attendance as well as other participants;
- Approval of the agenda;
- Approval of minutes of the last meeting;
- Summary of reports;
- Accounts of discussions;
- Summary of consensus reached; and
- Recording of votes on motions.

Appendix C - MAKING MEETINGS EFFECTIVE

Effective communication is essential for an effective PSSC meeting. Communication includes the ability to listen carefully, and to resist the temptation to interrupt. Speak clearly, positively, and only to the issue being discussed.

If you have several points to make, write them down ahead of time to help you stay focused.

The following tips will help ensure all members are working to ensure meetings are effective and efficient.

- Begin and end meetings on time,
- Turn off cell phones and other electronic devices,
- Stick to the agenda, keeping on track and on topic,
- Address the Chair one at a time,
- Limit the number of times a person speaks on an issue,
- Encourage communication in a comfortable, open atmosphere,
- Show empathy, patience, understanding, respect and cooperate with others,
- Support and consider diverse ideas without judgment,
- Make no assumptions,
- Offer solutions,
- Deal with disagreement and conflict openly and positively, and
- Ask questions and clarify your understanding by rephrasing or paraphrasing.

Appendix D - SCHOOL PLAN

The School Plan is a tool used by schools to ensure there is continuous, incremental improvement in the learning of all students over time.

School Plans are generally developed for a one to three year time period. Questions to be considered in establishing a School Plan include:

What should the school be able to do for all students?

- Is the school successful at doing it now?
- What data supports this assessment?

If not, what learning aspects need to be improved, and which should have the priority for improvement?

- How will the school get improvement in the identified priority areas?
- What data can help in deciding what should be improved?
- Did we review school based and provincial academic results?

School Plans in New Brunswick do not have a common form or format; but they may contain the following components:

- Purpose: The plan shows the link between the school mission, vision and the areas targeted for improvement.
- Goals: The learning areas targeted for improvement, for example, literacy. Goals should be data informed.
- Measures: These describe how the success of the plan will be measured, for example, numeracy or literacy assessments.
- Standards: These indicate how well the school must do on each of the measures to be considered successful.
- Objectives: The school identifies the specific results to be achieved in a specific amount of time. Objectives are not changed for the life of the plan.
- Actions: These are the strategies used to reach the objectives. The School Plan includes
 actions, dates on when each action begins and ends, and the individual responsible for
 making it happen. While objectives do not change for the duration of the plan, actions
 can be changed and changes in circumstances may result in actions being added,
 modified, or replaced.
- Resources: The plan identifies the realistic, available resources necessary to put the actions into effect including time, funding or personnel.
- Once the plan has been put into place, these resources cannot be reallocated to other uses unless Actions can be completed without this support.
- Monitoring: The plan identifies who is responsible for monitoring the progress of the plan, and how often monitoring reports will be given.

PSSC Handbook

• Assessment and Evaluation: The plan identifies who is responsible for collecting the data required to make a judgment on the plan's success. It indicates who makes the final evaluation and how the evaluation results are to be distributed.

School districts may have a guide in how school plans should be constructed and monitored.

Appendix E - CODE OF CONDUCT

Each Parent School Support Committee develops its own Code of Conduct to facilitate meetings and relationships. Suggestions include that a PSSC member:

- Accepts the education of all students in the school as their first obligation,
- Limits discussion to matters of concern to the whole school community,
- Applies democratic principles,
- Promotes high standards of ethical practice,
- Is guided by the school's mission and vision statements,
- Is honest, discreet, and respectful in discussing problems and/or conflicts,
- Never discloses confidential information,
- Respects that some school business is confidential, and may limit the PSSC operations or discussions,
- Treats the Principal and staff with respect,
- Encourages a positive atmosphere where individual contributions are encouraged, valued, and respected,
- Uses appropriate communication channels when questions and concerns arise, and
- Declares any conflict of interest (personal, family or business relations, monetary interest, inability to devote complete loyalty or the appearance of impropriety).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural part of human existence. It can be a positive force if used to clarify an issue, increase member involvement, encourage growth, create more spontaneous communication and strengthen relationships. It can be negative when it diverts energy from the task at hand, decreases productivity, destroys morale, deepens differences, produces irresponsible behaviours and creates suspicion and distrust. To resolve conflict:

- Identify the source of the conflict is it disagreement on facts, goals, methods, values, beliefs or ethics?
- Identify contributing problems is it communication, organizational structure, resources, or human factors such as lack of skill or personality traits?
- Resolve the conflict through an appeal or conflict resolution process.

Individual student issues are not the responsibility of the PSSC. Parents/guardians should speak and/or meet with their child's teacher first.

If the problem is not resolved, they should meet with the Principal. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the matter should be directed to the appropriate staff at the District Office.

Appendix F - ENGAGING WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Communicating and engaging parents is a key part of the PSSC's responsibilities. Parents play a critical role in their child's education, however, drawing them in to schools and forging constructive parent-school relationships can be challenging. Here is a short list of ideas for communicating with parents and getting them involved with your school.

- Generally, the Chair and Principal will work together and share responsibility for communications about the role of PSSC, generating interest in the elections, and encouraging participation.
- Information can be provided in writing to parents, teachers and students and PSSCs can also help encourage participation by giving presentations, hosting discussions and talking to parents one-on-one about the important work of the PSSC in your school.
- The school website, local public service announcements, and social media can also be
 used to promote awareness of the work being done by the PSSC and events such as
 upcoming elections.

Your PSSC Chair will work with the Principal to determine how best to handle media inquiries.

Tips for building better community relationships:

- **Stop using jargon** translate educational terminology into everyday language.
- **Visit parents on their turf** at home, community centre, church, or the school.
- Ask parents to teach what they know for example, holding a multicultural day with parents presenting on the cultures and customs of their home countries.
- **Welcome complainers** if they are coming to the school to complain, it indicates they have a comfort level with the school and may have useful suggestions to offer.
- Seek parent volunteers encourage parents to serve as hallway or playground monitors, or to help with classroom tasks. Please note that adults who have unsupervised access to children at school must have been cleared through a criminal records check and Policy 701 review.
- Offer educational activities for parents and children i.e. family literacy events.
- **Get parents to observe classes** consider "Take a Parent to School Day/Week" each hour/day cover a different subject, with parents able to visit classes and meet with the curriculum specialists.
- **Provide courses for parents** consider holding a day of workshops for parents on topics of interest, including school curriculum, personal financial accounting, drug awareness, and school computer use.
- Create a great school improve the school to improve parental support parents will recognize and buy into a good product when they see it.

Appendix G – PARENT SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE (PSSC) DECLARATION FORM

All members of the PSSC are required to complete a declaration form in order to serve on the PSSC			
In my capacity as a member of a Parent School Support Committee, and in accordance with Section 18 of Regulation 2001-48 un the Education Act,			
(insert name of school)	are of the o	, member of the PSSC of, in Anglophoneduties of the PSSC under the Education Act; here; and the requirement that I discharge my	
	on the	day of	
Signature of Member		Signature of Witness	

Appendix H - RESOURCES

Online Resources

- PSSC Website
- GNB Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Page
- Robert's Rules of Order

Legislation

- Education Act Chapter E-1.12, February 28, 1997
- Regulations under the Education Act:
- 97-150, School Administration, December 23, 1997
- 2001-24, School Districts & Sub-Districts, March 30, 2001
- 2001-48, Governance Structure, June 29, 2001
- 2001-51, Pupil Transportation, June 29, 2001
- 2004-8, Teacher Certification, February 19, 2004