

DATE: April 27, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee: Trustees Adams, Estabrooks, and Ip

SUBJECT: Proposed Resolutions for ASBA Spring and Fall General Meetings

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook](#), Section 6.2, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee

ISSUE

Prior to the ASBA Spring and Fall General Meetings (SGM, FGM) each year, the Board's ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee brings forward recommendations with regard to proposed resolutions. Emergent position statements are due by May 3, 2021.

BACKGROUND

The ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee is a committee of the Edmonton Public School Board. The purpose of the Committee is to advise and assist the Board in presenting issues and resolutions to the Alberta School Boards Association Zone and General Meetings.

The Committee is proposing two emergent resolutions be submitted for consideration at the ASBA SGM to be held June 6-8. The proposed emergent position statements include a brief description which will form the basis of the background submitted to ASBA.

1. Internet for All

"That the ASBA affirm that internet access is essential to Alberta students, staff, and families for participation not only in public education, but society, and should be accessible and affordable for all. Furthermore, that ASBA advocate to the federal and provincial governments on behalf of all Alberta school divisions for immediate initiatives to increase accessibility and quality and reduce costs of internet for students, staff and families."

Access to the internet is now a necessity. The high cost of service affects participation in school, opportunities in the job market, health care, and many other aspects of daily life for our students, staff, and families. The pandemic has highlighted how vital internet connectivity is.

Rural students have also been struggling with lack of access to reliable, affordable internet for an extended length of time. This lack of access limits their opportunity to participate in programming that they cannot obtain in their home community, which in turn limits their future options.

This motion directs ASBA to advocate to other orders of government and regulators (such as the CRTC), for immediate initiatives to increase accessibility, quality and reduce the cost of internet for students, staff, and families.

This position statement should be considered emergent given the ongoing pandemic and the importance of internet connectivity for learning.

2. Non-confidence vote on the new curriculum

“Given the number of school divisions opting out of the K-6 curriculum pilot, and given the numerous concerns about the draft K-6 curriculum, such as a lack of consultation with stakeholders, questions as to age and developmental appropriateness, and concerns raised by Chiefs with the Treaty 6 Confederacy and the Metis Nation of Alberta, we ask that ASBA advocate to the government on behalf of all school boards for a halt to the piloting and the implementation, and a rewrite of the K-6 curriculum.”

Alberta’s curriculum review and redesign has a long and complex history. Political parties have accused each other of infusing ideology into the content of what our children learn. And while the job of a Trustee does not include oversight or drafting of the curriculum, it does include ensuring that students have a modern, up-to-date curriculum and speaking up on behalf of parents when they express either support or concerns about what their children are learning in school.

Unfortunately, the current draft of the K-6 curriculum is rife with errors, plagiarism, and content that is not age appropriate or reflective of Alberta’s diversity. First Nations and Métis leaders, curriculum experts, educators, and parents agree that the current proposed curriculum is unsuitable for today’s classrooms.

The Métis Nation of Alberta and the Chiefs of Treaty 6 have called for a rejection of the curriculum, as it “perpetuates rather than addresses systemic racism.”

Trustees need to send a clear message that students, staff, and families will not tolerate their first-rate education system being subjected to anything less than a first-rate curriculum redesign.

But opting-out is only a band aid fix: it is a delay when we need a full repeal. The public outcry is strong; the only feasible solution is for the Minister to begin the process again, this time with full transparency, true education experts and Indigenous representation given sufficient time for their task and a focus on creating a truly up-to-date curriculum.

This position statement should be considered emergent given the government’s plan to pilot the curriculum in the fall of 2021 with roll out in September 2022.

The Committee is also proposing three non-emergent resolutions to be submitted for consideration at the ASBA FGM. Submissions for this meeting are due by May 31, 2021.

1. Collection of race-based data

“Given that collecting race-based data is one necessary step in working to dismantle systemic racism and racial discrimination, we ask that ASBA formally request on behalf of all school boards that Alberta Education develop a model for the collection of race-based data for staff and students across Alberta, in consultation with communities impacted by racism.”

Research shows that Black, Indigenous and People of Colour experience and are harmed by systemic racism. The collection of race-based data is a practice that can help address racism and racial discrimination. Currently, the lack of race-based data within Alberta school divisions is making it difficult

for divisions to measure educational inequalities and furthermore to identify inequities that exist because of racism and discrimination.

On September 22, 2020, the Edmonton Public Schools Board passed the following motion at our public Board meeting:

Given that collecting race-based data is one necessary step in working to dismantle systemic racism and racial discrimination, the Edmonton Public School Board formally requests that Administration develop a model for the collection of race-based data in our Division, in consultation with communities in Edmonton impacted by racism.

Edmonton Public Schools is the first school jurisdiction in Alberta to formally move to collect race-based data. We expect that meaningful use of race-based data will lead to policy and planning change which will lead to greater equity within our school division for racialized students.

To be truly impactful, race-based data needs to be collected in school divisions across Alberta to help inform practice and policy decisions at the provincial level. This work could also align with race-based data collection that is emerging in Alberta Health Services and other sectors to provide a more holistic view of Alberta's citizens and the services they receive.

The collection of race-based data requires thoughtful and meaningful conversations with communities impacted by racism. If the work is to be meaningful, it must be done in collaboration with the community, in order to respect any concerns about student and family privacy and the use of the data.

This position statement should be considered at the FGM because of the need to begin to address systemic racism given its negative impact on staff and students across all school boards in the province.

2. Investigate inclusion

“That ASBA request that the provincial Auditor General investigate the challenges and barriers to achieving inclusion as intended by the 2009 “Setting the Direction” framework. This could include, but not be limited to, inclusion, class-size composition, supports, comparisons to jurisdictions, court rulings, and funding.”

The initiative, [Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta](#), was established in the spring of 2008 and was intended to create a new paradigm for special education to serve school divisions in their work to support students with special education needs. It was a major Alberta Education project designed to create a new framework to help students with special needs receive the education they need to be successful.

The intention of the initiative was to suggest systemic change, where all students are provided with the supports, programs and services they need to be successful. Twelve years later, it is time to assess the objectives laid out in that report.

Anecdotal feedback from teachers and parents report greater struggles with inclusion as resources diminish and it is more challenging to serve all students to the level they deserve. Worse yet, the pandemic has led many families of special needs students to struggle with inadequate or inconsistent supports.

Over the last decade the rhetoric of inclusion has been widely adopted, but funding models, especially the Weighted Moving Average have not kept pace with the growth and complexity of special needs students, especially with a freeze of the provincial education budget.

This position statement should be considered at the FGM because the impact of the new funding formula on students with special needs negatively impacts all school boards in the province and hinders the ability of all students to be fully included and supported throughout their education.

3. Restore monitoring and reporting of class size

“That the Alberta government continue to collect and make publicly available class size data consistent with previous reporting requirements by the Alberta government and report on this information annually.”

Knowledge is power. As school boards, we take pride in our evidence-based decision making. Absent clear and consistent reporting tools, it is difficult to track and visualize the impact of funding to the classroom.

The Funding Manual issued on October 24, 2019, no longer required school boards to report class size data. The previous Funding Manual required school jurisdictions to use an online reporting tool to consolidate their class size data and post their jurisdiction and school class size averages on their website by January 15th of each year.

This change disarms accountability advocates of the evidence required to advocate against austerity and funding cuts and the impact of the new Weighted Moving Average funding framework.

This position statement should be considered at the FGM because the information is valuable for all school board and education advocates, particularly given the changes brought about by the new funding model and the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Edmonton Public School Board put forward two emergent resolutions for inclusion at the ASBA 2021 SGM:

- 1. “That the ASBA affirm that internet access is essential to Alberta students, staff, and families for participation not only in public education, but society, and should be accessible and affordable for all. Furthermore, that ASBA advocate to the federal and provincial governments on behalf of all Alberta school divisions for immediate initiatives to increase accessibility and quality and reduce costs of internet for students, staff and families.”**
- 2. “Given the number of school divisions opting out of the K-6 curriculum pilot, and given the numerous concerns about the draft K-6 curriculum, such as a lack of consultation with stakeholders, questions as to age and developmental appropriateness, and concerns raised by Chiefs with the Treaty 6 Confederacy and the Metis Nation of Alberta, we ask that ASBA advocate to the government on behalf of all school boards for a halt to piloting and the implementation, and a rewrite of the K-6 curriculum.”**

That the Edmonton Public School Board put forward three resolutions for inclusion at the ASBA 2021 FGM:

1. **“Given that collecting race-based data is one necessary step in working to dismantle systemic racism and racial discrimination, we ask that ASBA formally request on behalf of all school boards that Alberta Education develop a model for the collection of race-based data for staff and students across Alberta, in consultation with communities impacted by racism.”**
2. **“That ASBA request that the provincial Auditor General investigate the challenges and barriers to achieving inclusion as intended by the 2009 “Setting the Direction” framework. This could include, but not be limited to, inclusion, class-size composition, supports, comparisons to jurisdictions, court rulings, and funding.”**
3. **“That the Alberta government continue to collect and make publicly available class size data consistent with previous reporting requirements by the Alberta government and report on this information annually.”**

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. Approve the recommendations as presented
2. Request changes to the recommendations and provide feedback

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

In order for a position statement to be considered for the Spring General Meeting it must be considered emergent, or needing to be addressed by the ASBA membership in a timely manner. Both of the statements presented for SGM are relevant and timely.

The three being put forward for consideration for the FGM, though important and affecting students and school divisions in Alberta, are not considered emergent by the ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee and should therefore be submitted as regular position statements. Given that the FGM will be held in November, it is important that these position statements be clearly articulated and backed by solid evidence and rationale so that the incoming Board of Trustees can successfully present and advocate to ASBA members. If the Board feels that further research and work is needed on the regular position statements for FGM they can be referred back to committee for that work to happen.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, the Board will send a letter to ASBA member boards, including Zone 2/3 boards informing them of our proposed emergent and regular position statements. The Board of Trustees will secure seconders for both position statements.

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