

DATE: March 5, 2024

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director, Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE STAFF: Cathy MacDonald, Carrie Rosa

REFERENCE: *Section 14, [School Councils Regulation](#), Alberta Education [AA.BP Stakeholder Relations](#)*

ISSUE

Providing a summary of highlights from 2022-23 school annual reports submitted to Communications.

BACKGROUND

Alberta Education, through the *Education Act* and, more specifically, Section 14 of the [School Councils Regulation](#), requires all school council chairs to provide an annual report to the Edmonton Public School Board by September 30 of each year.

CURRENT SITUATION

Using a Google form, school councils submit their annual reports. A summary of the information is then presented to the Board of Trustees.

KEY POINTS

- As per Section 55 of the [Education Act](#), school councils may advise the principal and Board on school matters, consult with the principal to ensure students have opportunities to meet education standards set by the Minister, consult with the principal on fiscal matters and perform other functions authorized under the regulations.
- School councils provide a strong communication link between school administration and families.
- A summary of the challenges and successes that school council's face is included in Attachment I

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary of Findings

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School Council 2022-2023 Annual Report Highlights Summary of Findings

The findings in the 2022–23 school council annual report reflect the activities of **149** school councils that submitted reports. Note that some schools are unable to establish a school council; when this is the case, principals establish an advisory committee. Advisory committees are not required to submit an annual report.

Alberta Education, through the *Education Act* and Section 14 of the *School Councils Regulation*, requires all school council chairs to provide an annual report to their board by September 30 of each year. For the 2022–23 annual report, the Division continued to use a Google form to simplify the submission process for school councils.

As per Section 55 of the *Education Act*, school councils may advise the principal and Board on school matters, consult with the principal to ensure students have opportunities to meet education standards set by the Minister, consult with the principal on fiscal matters and perform other functions authorized under the regulations.

The findings from the 2022–23 annual reports indicate that school councils continued to live up to their mandate to act as an advisory group to the principal and school community. Information collected also indicates that councils supported schools through additional activities.

Predominant activities undertaken

School councils are composed mainly of parents of students who attend the school. A council functions primarily to provide feedback and advice to the principal on a variety of school functions and decisions. They provide a strong communication link between school administration and families. Some school councils also play an important part in liaising between school administration and the school's fundraising association to inform the potential use of any funds raised.

In order of highest to lowest participation rates, the main areas school councils noted they were involved with during the 2022–23 school year are as follows:

- **83.2 per cent** supported special events linked to the school plan (e.g., breakfast and healthy eating programs, book fairs, open houses, Walk for a Cure, Terry Fox runs, winter clothing drives for students in need, meet the teacher nights, family dances, barbecues, math nights, welcoming new families, carnivals and cultural celebrations)
- **79.9 per cent** supported learning within the school (e.g., established a school council, provided feedback to the principal, supported cultural awareness, and assisted with procurement of various learning tools and resources)
- **45.6 per cent** informed/advised the principal on the school's budget
- **45 per cent** informed/advised the principal on the school's education plan
- **37.6 per cent** informed/provided input to the principal on the school's results review
- **36.2 per cent** advocated for the needs of the school community to the city, province and other groups (e.g., advocated for improved traffic safety, invited local politicians to meetings, connected with other school councils to advocate for more schools, and advocated government for mental health supports in schools and for improved budget allocations to schools)
- **24.8 per cent** provided input to help inform the work of the Board of Trustees (e.g., inviting Trustees to meetings, providing feedback on school renaming)

- **24.8 per cent** informed the work of the Alberta School Councils' Association through an engagement task force or annual general meeting
- **22.8 per cent** worked on joint projects with the community or another school in support of the school plan (e.g., clothing drive, working with Ever Active Edmonton)

Additional activities

School councils supported additional activities, such as:

- Hosted a round dance and smudging ceremony, and celebrated being a Seven Sacred Teachings school
- Provided and recruited volunteers to support various clubs and programs
- Provided insight into mental health initiatives and school safety procedures
- Mentored new parent volunteers
- Developed outdoor learning spaces
- Led and supported staff appreciation initiatives
- Supported school's fundraising association
- Recruited guest speakers and organized various presentations of interest to families (cultural, mental health, literacy, etc.)
- Hosted information tables at school events so parents could ask questions and learn more about the work of the school council
- Organized artist-in-residence
- Supported new principals in learning more about the school community and generally supported other staff in ways they could (e.g., helping with volunteers)
- Helped write grants
- Assisted with student-led conferences and initiatives
- Created or updated school council operating procedures
- Supported hamper initiatives
- Led reconciliation projects (e.g., planting a heart garden)
- Helped with school yearbook projects
- Worked with La Cité Francophone to host a café in the school and to promote French language and culture
- Promoted and supported diversity and inclusion

Frequency of school council meetings

- **71.1 per cent** met monthly
- **14.8 per cent** met every other month
- The remainder met on varying and fluctuating frequencies (like quarterly or every six weeks)

How school councils met

- **63.8 per cent** had a mix of in-person and virtual meetings
- **22.1 per cent** met in person exclusively
- **14.1 per cent** met virtually exclusively

Meeting participation levels

- **61.7 per cent** had the same participation as in past
- **22.8 per cent** saw an increase in participation
- **15.4 per cent** experienced a decrease in participation

Funds handled

- **81.2 per cent** of respondents indicated their school council did not handle any funds last year as their school's fundraising association handles all funds
- **18.8 per cent** indicated their school council handled funds last year
- Some of the funds noted were from the \$500 Alberta School Council Engagement grant from the Alberta Government that all schools with school councils were eligible to apply for
- Funds were typically received and raised through initiatives like pizza lunches, grants, money from their fundraising association, parent donations, popsicle sales, gift card sales and bottle drives
- Funds raised went toward a variety of things such as breakfast and lunch programs, books, field trips, presentations, blanket exercise, staff appreciation (e.g., treats) and some events (e.g., cultural day, barbecue or farewell celebrations)

Successes some school councils experienced

- Virtual and/or hybrid meetings work well for some schools. Councils indicate that more parents/guardians attend (easier for attendees to schedule in time, don't have to worry about child care)
- Updated school council website
- Some schools experienced more engagement and some reported being able to attract new executive members
 - Some had success through experiences like park playgroups, information tables at school events, and connecting with other parents/guardians at school events and the school community group chat
- Contributed to positive morale school culture/spirit (e.g., recognizing staff with treats)
- Ward Trustees attending meetings drew parent interest
- Worked on better communication with families
- Focused on improving upon, and increasing, diverse school council membership
- Were able to gather diverse opinions and experiences
- Organized guest speakers/presenters
- Were able to work with city council and traffic departments to improve safety in and around the school and community
- After several years of inactivity, a school was able to get enough people to form a school council and full quorum for meetings
- Created operating procedures

Challenges some school councils faced

- A majority of schools continued to struggle to get parents involved and/or keep them engaged
- Some schools struggled with their families understanding the purpose of the school council
- Some schools encountered challenges navigating strong personalities at meetings
 - Some schools reported this affected further engagement as some people stopped going to meetings because of it
- Meetings running too long
- Challenges finding volunteers to help with school council-supported activities
- Some noted they didn't have the proper technology to smoothly navigate online or hybrid meetings (sound or visual difficulties, or combination of both)
- Some schools noted their councils lacked diversity
- Some schools faced barriers sharing information due to language differences

- Some school councils are experiencing burnout because the same parents are always involved and the “go-to” people
- A few schools experienced executive council members stepping down mid-year and then council left trying to fill spots
- Some school councils had all new members and experienced challenges not having anyone with past experience, notes to share or provide mentorship

Common goals school councils set for following year

- Many schools indicated their desire to increase parent participation and engagement, encourage volunteerism and build a stronger sense of community
 - Some planned tactics are
 - pairing meetings with presentations/events
 - trying to diversify members
- Succession planning for new council executive members
- Continuing to support staff and students through appreciation initiatives
- Continuing to support school events like open houses and celebrations
- Plan more activities for school community
- Improve communications with families by
 - trying to organize parent/guardian class representative to improve communication
 - collaborating with school principal on creating agendas and sharing information
- Help decrease food insecurity in school (like breakfast, lunch and snack program support)
- Work on plans to manage inappropriate behaviour at meetings
- Support initiatives and events like book fair, read-a-thon, artist-in-residence, garden projects, clothing drive, cultural days, celebrations and free outside library
- Collaborate more with teachers and school administration to enhance and support enrichment activities, and teaching and learning experiences
- Update operating procedures
- Contribute to a respectful, inclusive, kind and citizen-oriented school
- Collaborate more with fundraising society
- Encourage participation in Alberta School Councils’ Association (ASCA) training and representation at the ASCA annual general meeting
- Work on advocacy initiatives like school funding, traffic safety, online safety awareness and bike theft
- Have shorter and more organized/efficient meetings
- Make meeting minutes more accessible