

DATE: February 7, 2023

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 2021–22 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 designed by the Division to streamline and simplify the process, school councils can 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 is included in Attachment I

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary
Summary of findings

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ATTACHMENT I

School Council 2021-2022 Annual Report Highlights Summary
Summary of findings

The findings in the 2021–22 school council annual report reflect the activities of 165 schools who submitted reports. Please note 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 division board by September 30 of each year. For the 2021–22 annual report, the Division again used 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 2021–22 annual reports indicate that despite some continuing limitations in school councils' ability to be as involved inside schools due to public health measures, they 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 2021–22 school year are as follows:

- **79 per cent** supported teaching and learning within the school (e.g., established a school council, provided feedback to the principal, supported cultural awareness and mental health initiatives, advocated for extra student supports like reading specialists, school-based anti-racism education and action plans)
- **71 per cent** supported special events linked to the school plan (e.g., lunch program, open houses, school grand openings, annual pumpkin run and cultural celebrations)
- **52 per cent** informed/advised the principal on the school's budget
- **43 per cent** informed/advised the principal on the school's education plan
- **33 per cent** informed/provided input to the principal on the school's results review
- **41 per cent** advocated for the needs of the school community to the city, province and other groups (e.g., advocated for public education funding, provided feedback to elected officials about draft curriculum, worked on traffic safety)

- **30 per cent** provided input to help inform the work of the Board of Trustees (e.g., meetings with ward Trustee)
- **23 per cent** worked on joint projects with the community or another school in support of the school plan (e.g., clothing drive, breakfast program, traffic and intersection safety, ending poverty in Edmonton)
- **24 per cent** informed the work of the Alberta School Councils' Association through an engagement task force or annual general meeting

Additional activities

School councils supported additional activities, such as:

- Revised council operating procedures
- Continued to support school drop-off/pick-up traffic safety through awareness campaigns
- Mentored new parent volunteers
- Spearheaded technology bursary
- Provided feedback to the principal about potential areas to start reopening with relaxed COVID-19 restrictions
- Supported families in needs (food hampers, clothing)
- Managed online newsletter to inform families about ongoing activities and opportunities
- Supported school's fundraising association
- Promoted and supported diversity (e.g., anti-racism workshops, Arabic Cultural Week celebration, Black History Month activities, French Canadian presentations, stories, guests and activities, and Diwali and Lunar New Year celebrations)
- Worked on rebuilding school spirit after the long period of COVID-19 restrictions
- Advocated for things such as snow removal, traffic safety, bus lanes, safe crosswalks and HEPA filters in classrooms
- Organized activities like fun field day, pizza and fun lunches, school picnic, artist in residence, courtyard clean-up and student garden bed preparation, adopt-a-garden program, farewell celebrations, aerobics residency, supported field trips, and helped with organizing land dedication of mamawatowin - Ross Sheppard School's reconciliation space
- Organized virtual numeracy and literacy presentations and events
- Organized guest speakers and presentations (e.g., Teens in high school – how to have difficult conversations about vaping, peer pressure; parent strategies for managing anxiety and managing mental health; resilience in students)
- Supported/promoted the neighbourhood community initiatives (e.g., free hockey program)
- Reviewed school's discipline policy related to student learning (rights and responsibilities)

Frequency of school council meetings

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

How school councils met

- 72.1 per cent met virtually
- 27.3 per cent had a mix of in-person and virtual meetings
- Less than one per cent met in person exclusively

Meeting participation levels

- 20.6 per cent saw an increase in participation
- 58.8 per cent had the same participation as in past
- 20.6 per cent experienced a decrease in participation

Funds handled

- A majority of respondents indicated their school's fundraising association handles all funds
- 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 grants, money from their fundraising association, parent donations, chocolate sales, art, card and t-shirt sales and hamper fundraisers
- Funds raised went toward a variety of things such as supporting breakfast, lunch and hamper programs, gift cards for students, staff appreciation (like a luncheon) and some events (like welcome back barbeque or farewell celebrations)

Successes some school councils experienced

- Virtual and/or hybrid meetings were easier to attend; therefore, new parents became involved and parents attended more regularly so quorum was met (which didn't always happen before hybrid meetings became an option)
- Set up a website to share all the school council information and contacts
- Some schools experienced more engagement once meetings returned to in-person
- Some schools were able to maintain enthusiasm throughout the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Ward Trustees attending meetings was very successful in drawing parent interest
- Collaborating with other school councils in their catchment area
- Good communication between parents and school staff
- Organized some great guest speakers/presenters

Challenges some school councils faced

- A majority of schools continued to struggle to get parents involved and/or keep them engaged. Schools who had lots of initial interest experienced drop-offs as the year progressed
- It was hard to maintain a sense of community/connection—a lack of in-person interactions made it more challenging to create connections
- There was uncertainty about what was permitted as they continued to navigate through the pandemic
 - There were varying opinions/approaches in community as restrictions began lifting
- Some challenges arose using online meeting platforms/technology (e.g., connections, meeting being hacked)
- Most school councils noted they were unable to organize and participate in many activities for the majority of last year due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic. There were fewer volunteering opportunities as well
- It was a challenging year for mental health
- Some councils found it harder to share information with families and missed the in-person opportunities
- Some school councils had all new members and it was challenging not to have anyone with past experience, notes to share or provide mentorship

- Some schools found adjusting to the approach of a new principal challenging
- Many school councils are trying to figure out better ways to engage and communicate with newcomer families

Some common school council goals for the 2022–23 school year

- Increase/rebuild the level of parent/guardian involvement/participation/connections within their school community
- Try and attract broader range of families
- Try to improve level of communication with, and feedback from, all families
 - Creating multicultural materials and using interpreters
 - Using social media
 - Sending out more meeting reminders
 - Sharing ways to get involved
 - Using surveys
 - Using class representatives on council to better represent the school community
- Try to have more in-person meetings, but perhaps offer a hybrid model of in-person and virtual, to accommodate and engage the greatest number of families
- Continue to keep families informed, engaged and involved
- Support school initiatives, celebrations, events and fundraisers the best they can
 - More in-person opportunities and events for deeper connections
 - Facilitate volunteer opportunities (e.g., math and reading tutor programs, student clubs)
 - Support mental health, reconciliation, anti-racism and anti-bullying initiatives
- Support initiatives of the school's fundraising association
- Strengthen relationship with school administration
- Take advantage of Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) workshops to strengthen council and engagement with families
- Increase advocacy work to government and community agencies to support public education (e.g., curriculum, traffic safety)
- Update governance documents/operating procedures
- Succession planning, enabling school councils to be more effective
- Reach out to schools in the catchment and share best practices and advocacy work
- Continue to support the needs of the students and school
- Continue to provide meaningful information sessions and presentations
- Try to form a Community of School Councils as a way for various school councils to network