

ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force - October 2018 RESULTS

11 Responses submitted (as of December 17, 2018)

Request for input about **Isolation Rooms in Schools**

*Please submit feedback to the ASCA by **December 15, 2018.***

1. Does your school have an “isolation” room?

Yes = 2 No = 9

2. What is this room called in your school? (isolation room, quiet room, seclusion room...)

- Calming room
- n/a = 2
- Quiet room
- Unsure
- We do not have isolation rooms since our current principal came to the school at the beginning of last year. The previously used rooms have the doors removed and are used for storage at this point.
- We have several rooms that are utilized for quiet space; exam writing; relaxing; and processing when in emotional crisis (ie: boyfriend break up and emotional upset following). Additionally we utilize the infirmary which shares space with the councillors in student services; it isn't isolating; but it is quiet and relaxing with a partition to create separation. All areas are closely monitored are easily viewed (either being window walled; or the cloth partition as noted above). We do not have an area that is closed off from full view; or fits the description provided as an 'isolation' room.

3. Does your school have “general rules” around how the room is to be used?

Comments:

- General rules; if requested the options in space are provided. The child is always offered assistance; meaning a councillor/teacher being present. Most cases; it is a request for separation to write exams without the anxiety of the classroom setting.
- n/a = 3
- not that I am aware of
- Our school uses the room for many purposes other than to isolate students in instances of behavioral issues; but any use for that purpose falls under the rules and guidelines of our district's Administrative Procedure 350 and the appendix to that AP which references the Alberta Education's Guidelines for using Timeouts in Schools (2002).
- Unsure
- Yes but we are not aware if there is anything formally written.

4. What information has administration shared with parents about the use of this room?

Comments:

- Communication about use of these room hasn't been consistent between parents. Sometimes there are conversations that might happen during a parent interaction with the

teacher. The general parent population is unaware of these rooms as it is used mostly for our students of a specialized program. Our school operates a specialized program called Junior Transition Positive Program. Use of the room is explain in the parent handbook. It compares the space to a bedroom at home - a safe place to calm until they are able to make better choices and is used only in the event of an aggressive tantrum that could lead to possible harm to self or others; a team intervention approach will be used to transfer the child to the calming room.

- n/a = 3
- none = 2
- No one has really asked any questions about them. During our meeting on this topic though; the principal shared simply that we don't have any of these rooms at our school. And; for children that need a space to de-escalate or quiet time they go to the heart of the school - the learning commons and are welcomed at any time.
- Unless the use of the Quiet Room is part of a behavior plan; which necessarily includes parents; there is no communication about the existence or use of this room.

5. What is the school council's view on these types of rooms?

Comments:

- Diverse to say the least. As a group we agree that there needs to be clarity as to what these 'isolation' rooms are to be utilized for; when; how long; and under what supervision. There needs to be an Alberta Ed policy in position; along with the outline of insurance coverages for liability. This is an explosive concept; with a potential for huge backlash. However there does exist a real need as there is often a threat to the teacher; classmates; and the child if they have a condition to leads to explosive outbursts.
- No discussion on the topic
- Our school council feels that these rooms should not be used for punishment of any kind. Any specific instances where children do require 'space' for de-escalation; writing a test or quiet time there are other areas in the school that can be accommodating for the child.
- -situational specific: safety of self/others (last resort; and many check ins are required)-the term to be used would be more for de-escalation and calming then to be used as a penalizing action for behaviour
- Some members were surprised they still existed. Others (with experience) said that the rooms can be helpful to students who really need it. Staff training is paramount. Restraints are sad but can be necessary sometimes it's a matter of student/other safety.
- That it should be used when safety of students and staff are at risk. There should be formal processes and reports filled out to document time in; time out; what happened before the behaviour; what the behaviour was; and what other methods of deescalation were attempted. And this information should be shared with parents if the child is having to be placed in the calming room.
- The school council believes that they are useful when used within guidelines.
- We feel there are better methods to be used in place of these types of rooms.

- We trust our Administration and the guidelines put in place at a district level and support the choices made at our school.
- While we can see the benefits of these rooms when students require some space to self-regulate; we feel the name itself offers a very negative connotation. Names such as 'calm-down rooms' or 'self-regulation center' offer a much more accurate view through current education standards and are far more positive.

6. Is your school council in favour of, against, or undecided, regarding isolation rooms?

Comments:

- Against = 2 -against the terms 'seclusion room' and 'isolation room'-against it being used to penalize students-used not as a norm but a last resort when all other de-escalation strategies are exhausted
- Favour = 4
 - Context is important. If used properly; they can be helpful for the student. The overall preference is that the room would never be needed.
 - Majority were in favour. Voting results: 7 in favour; 1 against; 0 undecided.
 - The school council is in favour of using isolation rooms for those specialized programs that may require them. For example BLA programs.
 - We are in favour of using the Quiet Room in our school as long as it is used in accordance with the AP 350.
- Undecided = 3
 - As this is a relatively new topic gaining ground we think there is both information and regulations/requirements missing; and needed. Ultimately all students are deserving of privacy and comfort; especially if they are needing some extra supports with self-regulating and calming.
 - As a group we remain undecided as to whether there is a need for a definitive 'isolation' room. We are unanimous in our agreement that policy needs to be specific; clearly outlined/defined; as well as all administrators and teachers been educated regarding use/supervision/responsibilities.
- Against; if its for punishment. In Favour; if its for a quiet room that allows the child space to calm themselves.

7. Does your school council think there should be provincial regulations regarding the use of these rooms?

Comments:

Yes = 8

- We believe district level policies which are monitored by the provincial government are best suited in this area. Contents of these spaces cannot be a one size fits all for the diverse student body in Alberta; but the construction of them can; and should; be.
- The province should mandate training for staff involvement but regulations on intervention should be limited. It would be best to establish guidelines with flexibility given that every

situation is student dependent and each student is unique. We need to trust professionals to know what they're doing.

- Definitive policy needs to be created. We suggest that psychologists; teachers; parents; and lawyers be involved in the creation and any decisions related to this undertaking.

Transparency is a must!

- we believe students and schools alike would feel more confident in the system if there were provincial guidelines and oversight.

8. What other rooms/areas does your school have that are used for students with particular needs? (eg. sensory ...)

Comments:

- None
- Our learning commons is the heart of the school; and its used for many things besides reading. Children come to play puzzles; games; enjoy conversation; build lego; have quiet time.... many children use this space for a variety of needs.
- Our school has resource rooms which are used for small groups as well as for 1:1 learning supports.
- Sensory Room; Working Room; Kitchen
- Study rooms
- The school uses various locations depending on availability and need. These may include: Administration personal offices; conference room; Library; Auxiliary Gym; and Breakout Rooms. Student is always supervised.
- we do not have a room by your definition of an isolation room. We do have windowed areas to children to take down time; write exams; and decompress as well as the infirmary area. Children are offered choices (sometimes based on availability).
- We have a sensory room and a wellness room.
- Yes; there are other rooms in the school with options to accommodate children with particular needs.

9. How and what are these rooms/areas used for?

Comments:

- Learning support needs as well as small groups.
- Sensory Room is used for children with sensory processing disorders. Working Room is used for deescalation and self regulation. Kitchen is used for cooking programs. Calming room is used for calming; deescalation; safety; and self regulation.
- The sensory and wellness rooms are spaces where students can go if they need quiet time to reflect; calm down or work. Sometimes students are directed there; sometimes they ask to go. Students are always supervised in these spaces.
- They are used to help the student regulate themselves.
- Unsure

- We have programs for younger students; pre-school age that take place in our school; some of these students need the adjustments available in these rooms. The rooms are available to our other students who might need a break from their regular classroom experience.
- where students with or without Teacher assistants can work together to avoid distractions from other students/noises etc. Also used for Distant Learning students

10. Who makes the most use of these rooms/areas?

Comments:

- All the children - some with behavioural or learning issues and many without; that just need space to be quiet
- Our PALS students typically use the rooms most frequently.
- Students from the Junior Transition Program; students with disabilities; student with sensory processing disorders.
- Students with teacher supervision. Either a 1:1 setting small groups working together on a common project or outcome.
- Students with special needs and Distant Learning Students
- There is no specific person. It is on an as-need basis.
- These rooms are used by many students; particularly those with ASD or mental health challenges. All students can use the space as needed.
- Unsure

School Council Name:

- Dr. Martha Cohen School Council
- Ecole Father Jan School Council; St. Albert
- Ecole Joseph Moreau
- Ecole McTavish High School
- Erle Rivers High School
- Esther Starkman Parent Council
- Pine Street School Council
- St. Gabriel School - Fort McMurray
- Westwood Community High School Council
- Wye School