

ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force - January 2019 REQUEST FOR INPUT

Thank you for participating in the *School Council Engagement Task Force (SCETF)* for the 2018 – 2019 school year.

The feedback that your school council parent representative compiles and submits to the ASCA is greatly appreciated by the Board to assist in their considerations on education issues in Alberta.

*Feedback to the ASCA by **March 22, 2019. TOTAL RESPONSES: 17***

1. Does your school have a SCHOOL COUNCIL **and** a SOCIETY?

Yes = 16 No = 1

If Yes:

a) Are they comprised of the same members or two separate groups of participants?

- Both are elected groups. There is some overlap but not typically.
- Both - we have some same members and a couple different on the society
- For the past few years both groups have had the same individuals serving on the executives. This year is the first year we've had a change to this. The president/chair role is filled by 2 separate individuals. This occurred due to a conflict of interest; i.e. spouses cannot serve on the same society executive.
- Mostly the same members
- Mostly the same members but our society has membership forms.
- Mostly the same members; but key roles are filled by different people.
- Our council and society consist of separate members on each executive. Most members attend both meetings.
- Same members
- Separate groups and separate participants. Our school is an alternative school so our society owns our school building and owns the buses. The society is run by a board of volunteers (who are parents). They oversee the finances related to the society. I must add that our society will not be typical of most schools in the province because of our alternative status.
- Some positions yes
- The two groups collaborate however they do operate separately with some members from School Council also sitting as directors on Ed Society.
- They are comprised of the same members. We are a small school and it's difficult enough to get school council members sometimes!!
- Two separate groups of participants that meet on separate nights.
- We have two different councils with different meeting days/times with separate by-laws. Some parents/guardians choose to be members of both School Council and Participarent
- Yes; same members. It acts as an extension of our parent council.

b) How does your school council and society work together to prioritize where funds are best used?

- Discussion at monthly meetings to discuss where the funds can be used.
- Mostly through precedent and usually a through discussion and majority vote.

- Not applicable to our school because of our alternative status. We hosts some events together but for the most part; our Society operates as a separate entity.
- Our school council and society has not worked together to develop a joint plan; re: initiative for ensuring equitable funding. We are working to implement this however some longtime members have been uninterested in change; administration has not been open to this dialogue.
- Our Society runs all our big amounts of fundraising - \$500+They then go to the school council to find out in priority what they are fundraising for. The teachers and Admin will create a list and recently we introduced that teachers can apply for \$500 per class. They put forth a proposal and we vote on it. Also - if the council receives any money through the year (community events with a little fundraising) we use all this money (under \$500 a year) to bless the Admin and Staff. (end of year party; meals during parent teacher conferences etc.)
- The Chairs of School Council and Participarent meet regularly to keep each other informed. There is a Participarent Representative that attends both meetings and reports back about what happens at each Councils meeting
- The majority of fundraising dollars are given to Ed Society who receives a 'wish list' from school administration. This list is then reviewed against the spending bylaws of the society and approved. The Council Chair and Ed Society Chair work closely together to ensure as much funding is available as possible to enhance learning and benefit as many students as possible each year. It is a very collaborative relationship.
- The society votes on the funding requests. School council can recommend fund use; but not decide on it.
- There is little to no interaction between the school council and fundraising society.
- They do not work together. The Booster Club (society) works to raise funds to enhance extra-curricular programs and does not consult the School Council.
- We discuss issues/ideas at our council meetings then make motions to vote on the disbursement of the money at our society meetings.
- We discuss the merits of the expense on the Council level (as the membership is larger and encourages parent input) and then; if approved; the ask goes to Society to further discuss and approve/deny the expense.
- We discuss what needs our school has at school council meetings and use those conversations to prioritize where funds are best used. An example of this is last year our school council donated funds to help purchase an AED for our school as well as emergency 'buckets' for each classroom in the case of a lock down situation. We would love to expand our playground and are working together to see how feasible that would be.
- We hold our meetings consecutively; allowing us to benefit from clear communication between the two distinct groups. Typically through simple discussion. We agree that monies must be allocated equally among sports and arts groups; as well as clubs. We know that the decisions we make today in gifting monies do set a precedent for the future.
- We vote on it
- We're the same body; so we're discussed the needs that are required within the school and make a collective decision as to how they are dispersed.

- c) In what way does the administration contribute to decisions regarding how funds are used?
- A request is submitted and we vote - most of the time the administration only asks for funds for things they know we will approve.
 - Administration approves funding requests to be brought to the society; but has no vote on whether the society approves requests.
 - Administration attends all meetings for both groups and has advised the Booster Club when needed.
 - Administration can ask for money on their wish lists but do not normally contribute to decisions about funds being used.
 - Administration collects a 'wishlist' from staff; they may make suggestions on larger ticket items (for example; noting how funds had been used in the past and the benefits enjoyed by students). They do not vote or attempt to sway decisions in any way whatsoever.
 - Administration compiles a wish list of items that they are requesting funding for each year which is presented to Ed Society.
 - Administration lets booster club know of any shortfalls where funding could be used.
 - Administration makes recommendations on priorities.
 - For the past 3 years; administration has developed a funding request of the society; based on teacher/staff feedback and without the contributions of our school council members.
 - Mostly through precedent and usually a through discussion and majority vote.
 - Our school principal; a staff member teacher and often our divisional board member attend our school council meetings and give input on needs the school has from their viewpoint. Then the school council/society makes a decision as to where to invest money raised.
 - Provides recommendations to the council from staff; staff requests based on classroom needs.
 - They advise or give feedback on where funds may best be used
 - They talk to the staff about what they want; they then bring the list to the school council. They also check the proposals before we look at them
 - We consult with the school administration about their priority list. They will also come to us with specific asks.

If No:

- a) Why not?
- The society is a separate entity from the school.
 - We were advised by ASCA that as a Catholic School we were to only be a school council. There is no need for us to be a society since we do not engage in gambling related fundraisers.
- b) Is your school council strictly advisory or does it participate in/organize fundraising?
- Advisory and organize fundraising
 - Fundraising is done through casinos
 - Our school council is strictly an advisory group; our volunteer coordinator provides assistance by reaching out to our database of parents/guardians should the society require additional help with any of their initiatives.

- School Council has a fundraising volunteer that coordinates the annual fundraising event.
 - We organize and participate in fundraising. However; since our parents pay fees; we do not want to place additional financial burden on them so we organize small fundraisers usually for everyday items - Epicure; Pizza; Booster Juice; popcorn etc. Our school administrator handles our cash transactions.
 - We work closely with our society in planning and running fundraisers.
- c) If your school council participates in/organizes fundraising, in what way does the administration contribute to decisions regarding how funds are used?
- Administration can ask for money on their wish lists but do not normally contribute to decisions about funds being used.
 - Administration provides feedback and input on how funds are used. We collaborate together as much as possible with the Principal and Staff Representative.
 - Collaborative. School Council and Booster Club work together to allocate funds where needed.
 - We always seek their input on the needs at the school and we use the funds raised for the mutual benefit of students.

Additional comments:

- For example; some teachers requested a math and science online program because we are a small school and we currently do not have a lab (we will have one soon) so we raised funds to purchase it. We also raised funds to purchase jerseys for the school; equipment for students to play with during recess (balls etc). We use funds raised to host School Council sponsored events such as potlucks and pancake breakfasts.
- Our School Council; Administration and Ed Society work very closely and collaboratively together with regards to fundraising; determining where funds will be spent and maximizing both council and Ed Society's budgets for the benefit of the school and all students.
- Our school has been in a period of transition from a community-based regular program school to an alternative science program school which draws students from the SE quadrant of the city. With this evolution; new volunteers have joined both groups. Throughout the past 3 years; we've 1) dissolved a society and transferred assets to another; 2) audited our books of record for both groups and identified issues such as i. operating at an arms length; ii. seperating existing documentation and iii. ensuring legislation/rules are followed by each group properly.
- Until recently; our Council did do small fundraisers. There were some concerns raised based on the language used in our district's council handbook. It reads: 'Therefore; when a school council decides to independently organize an activity; such as a ski program or fundraiser; it cannot organize it in the name of the school council but as a parent group or a society (an entity incorporated under the Societies Act). Any liabilities that may arise from such activity will be the responsibility of the parent group/society. 'Further communication from our district said that (paraphrasing) Council can support activities where the principal or teacher is involved in planning; organizing and active supervision. This creates a bit of a grey area and so we thought it best to minimize risk and to move all fundraising to Society.
- We have had a hard 2 years of distinguishing the difference between Society and Council and our differences. Just in the last year we have cleared our 2 areas and actually have a great system now!