

ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force - **December 2019 RESULTS**  
**14 Responses submitted (as of February 2, 2020)**

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The feedback 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.

*The Board utilizes information gathered to inform the advocacy work of the association. This may include advising at external committee meetings, sharing with appropriate Ministries or provincial education organizations, and the potential for Board sponsored Advocacy Resolutions.*

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Request for input regarding “**Priorities for Education**”.

*Background/context:*

The **Alberta Education Business Plan 2019-2023** released in October 2019 contains four (4) Ministry Outcomes intended to provide leadership, direction, and oversight in the delivery of a student-centred K-12 education system that provides assurance to the public and promotes student success:

- Alberta’s students are successful
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Alberta are successful
- Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders
- Alberta’s K-12 education system is well governed and managed

[Click here to view the complete Alberta Education Business Plan 2019-23](#)

Part 1: Provincial Education ***Desired Outcomes/Goals/Priorities***

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Using a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 indicating “*not* supportive at all”, and 5 indicating “*very* supportive”, please rate how *supportive* your school council is of the following Alberta Education Business goals (results shown in brackets after the scale value):

Alberta’s students are successful

1 (0) 2 (0) 3 (1) 4 (2) 5 (11)

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Alberta are successful

1 (0) 2 (0) 3 (1) 4 (3) 5 (10)

Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders

1 (0) 2 (0) 3 (0) 4 (4) 5 (10)

Alberta’s K-12 education system is well governed and managed

1 (1) 2 (0) 3 (3) 4 (2) 5 (8)

1) Which of the current education outcome(s)/goal(s) does your school council feel Alberta Education should **increase** its focus on, and why?

Alberta's students are successful (6):

- We want all Alberta students to have the same access to high quality education. We do not want to see a voucher funding model (under any name) applied. We do not want to see public schools who are mandated to serve all students from all walks of life lose funding at the hands of high priced tuition schools that are allowed to turn back any students who would not fit into their molds.
- More than just good teachers accomplish this; small class sizes; parent involvement; access to resources and wellness supports.
- EVERY student should be successful and we feel that this plan does not include any direction on special needs or mental health.
- Student success.
- #1 by implementing the curriculum that was already created through consultation and experienced participants and professionals.
- Alberta Education should focus on the first goal (that Alberta's students are successful) because the only way to achieve that goal is for all other goals to be met. Alberta students can only succeed if they have excellent teachers. Alberta students can only be successful if the education system is well-managed. What reformations need to be made to ensure all Alberta's students are successful?...Equipping students with special needs the necessary resources so they achieve success. Under the current system students with identified needs do not receive the required supports to provide successful learning outcomes. Often these children end up performing well below their actual capabilities; end up facing disciplinary measures (that wouldn't be required if the appropriate supports were provided in the first place); forced into homeschooling; and often do not have a path for graduation and end up leaving the education system with expanded mental health issues as a result. Overall; this is not a benefit to our kids; our families or; our society at large. By providing targeted supports; not only will it help ensure successful outcomes for children with identified needs but; it will also benefit ALL children who receive education in our Province. Making class sizes 18 to 20 students for Kindergarten through grade 2. If all Alberta students are successful; then so are First Nations; Metis; and Inuit students in Alberta because they are ALL Alberta students.

Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders (3):

- Excellence in teaching and having strong teachers in the classroom will lead to a trickle-down effect on all other indicators.
- \*They integrate together to create a successful society\* Whichever one will keep teachers in classrooms and give school divisions the budget they need\* Students are the most important\* We need good leaders to support student success.
- We believe that a focus on 3 & 4 will lead to better outcomes for Alberta students.

Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed (3):

- System Management and successful students as an outcome. The system could find efficiencies; as well as this area being key to allowing for successful students.
- We feel #4 with better funding of education and public schools.
- We believe that a focus on 3 & 4 will lead to better outcomes for Alberta students.

Miscellaneous input (4):

- Math; reading and the arts.
- Rural funding and supporting rural communities.
- Increase focus on students pursuing careers with an active job market.

- Ensuring Catholic; public and separate schools remain available for choice and properly funded to support ALL diverse learners in our community.

2) Which of the current education outcome(s)/goal(s) does your school council feel Alberta Education should **decrease or eliminate** its focus on, and why?

Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders (1):

- 3.2 Providing guidance on the evaluation of teacher and school leader performance. We already have quality leadership standards in place. We see this leading to a 'pay for performance' system. One already proven ineffective in other countries. We feel we are seeing the beginnings of this in post-secondary institutions and must work to prevent it in k-9.

Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed (1):

- 4.1 Choice in Education. At the VERY LEAST it needs to say 'Choice in PUBLIC Education' This is an introduction to the Americanization of Alberta Public Education. As much as we hear there is no intention to introduce a voucher system we must continue to work towards maintaining public education.

Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed (2):

- We would rather see school admin with more say on the management and governance and more funds in the classrooms and spent on the students.
- If one had to be chosen then decrease outcome four (4): Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed specifically the Key Objective of Support Choice In Education.... There is already a significant amount of choice in education in Alberta and we support maintaining the French Immersion; second language and Catholic Education. Adding more choices like charter or private schools stretches the limited funds for public education too thin. The other points under this outcome are great.

Miscellaneous input (5):

- All goals are valuable and should be maintained in the business plan.
- Using the same old lessons that are out of date.
- Unsure (1)
- None (7)
  - o If one had to go we would choose #2.
  - o None; all are worth pursuing; but all of these should be pursued within in the context of a publicly funded; publicly administered system available to all students on an equally-funded basis.
  - o None; they are all important.
- The public education system should be using public dollars for the PUBLIC EDUCATION system; NOT private education. This Ministry's support of PRIVATE education undermines public education!

3) Are there additional outcome(s)/goal(s) your school council feels Alberta Education should **include** in future Education Business Plans?

- Support for the inclusion model including increased funding; appropriate staffing/resources; and class sizes to appropriately meet the needs of all learners.
- There needs to be a focus on supports for mental health. We had initially felt it should be included in Key Objective 1 but decided that it is SO IMPORTANT that it needs it's own key objective. Not just programming for mental health; but prescribed supports; in terms of human supports and material supports.
- Bring back school fees. 25.00 a student. if you make less then 60;000 its 10.00.

- Funding for rural schools increases; so the students have the same access to opportunities and education as urban students.
- As we are increasing our awareness of Native culture; we should encourage all children to explore their culture and share information about it with others. Increasing a sense of pride in who they are.
- A focus on diverse learners-Scrap 'new math'-Pass the curriculum-Could parents be included as important partners somewhere in there?
- There needs to be a different funding model especially for Rural Schools. More focus on Wellness / Mental Health programs and resources.
- Mental health is an ever-increasing component in student success and this business plan doesn't address it at all.
- No; but the outcomes/goals are so broad as to not be particularly useful. More specificity beyond the goals and objectives listed would be helpful.
- Increased funding for diverse learners.
- Emphasizing the 3 Rs; so that success will be attainable.
- That students with disabilities funding follows the child. School boards specifically receive that money to provide for their specific/identified needs. Ensuring those funds are *\*actually\** spent on providing those necessary supports to that child will elevate equitable access to education for our most vulnerable students.
- We indicated stable, predictable, adequate inclusive public education funding. Funding is addressed in the 'well governed and well managed' piece, but I still believe it warrants specificity as a goal.

## Part 2: **Key Objectives** to support Ministry Outcomes

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### Outcome One (1): **Alberta's students are successful**

#### **Key Objectives**

- 1.1 Ensure Alberta's curriculum provides students with the essential knowledge and skills and foundational competencies they need to be successful.
  - 1.2 Reform provincial assessment to allow students, parents and teachers to clearly identify areas of strength and areas in need of additional support.
  - 1.3 Increase opportunities for young Albertans' to participate in hands-on learning experiences in apprenticeship, skilled trades and vocational education.
- 4) Does your school council suggest any *additions, changes or deletions* related to the *Key Objectives* above for Outcome One?

Yes (9) No (5)

If yes, please explain:

- 1.1 should read '... with the essential FORWARD-THINKING knowledge... to be successful IN AN EVER-EVOLVING WORLD.' We need to meet current and future goals; not be looking back.
- We have questions regarding 1.2 and how these provincial assessments are designed for identifying areas of support and strength. As parents; we do not find the information attained from provincial assessments useful at all. It does not help us to understand how to support our children's education. What works better; is having teachers who are using strong assessment practices in their classrooms; and communicating with us on an ongoing basis as to the supports we need to know about to help our children.

- 1.2 should read '... additional support WITH MORE INPUT FROM SCHOOL STAFF AND ADMINISTRATION AND LESS FROM THE MINISTRY.' We can't have upheaval of education every 3-5 years; it's expensive; disruptive; unfair and borders on withholding of education.
- 1.2 It isn't clear from any information provided here or in the full business plan why 'reform' of provincial assessment is necessary. Changing 'reform' to 'ensure excellence in' would be more appropriate.
- 1.2 - A clear definition of what provincial assessment involves is required. Given the varied socio-economic backgrounds of communities and the complex learning needs of children across the province, standardized assessment have proven ineffective in identifying outliers or poor performers. In addition, such testing practices will encourage teachers to become risk-averse, discouraging innovation and encouraging them to teach to the exam. Without clarity of the intent of this government's intent to link funding to academic performance, it seems as though their use of standardized testing as a primary performance metric leads me to believe the outcome will be funding based on performance. I do not support this as I feel it is not in the best interests of Alberta students. I do like the addition of written response in the math diploma, no calculator portions of PATs. All of their performance metrics in the Alberta Business Plan 2019-2023 are based on PAT and diploma test results, so I understand why these tests are valuable to the government, but do not believe they are necessarily accurate representations of student understanding.
- 1.3 – Given one of the main goals of our education system is the development of students who become life long learners, inspired to pursue their interests and aspirations, combined with the fact that 81.9% of students, teachers and parents were satisfied with the opportunities to receive a broad spectrum of study, I would remove the 1.3. While it is valuable and necessary to ensure students are aware of their options for pursuing a skilled trade or vocational education, just as it is necessary that they are aware of all of their options for secondary education. The ultimate goal remains the development of children that keep learning as they grow into whomever they choose to be, not training that prepares students for specific occupations.
- 1.3 should read '...vocational education AS WELL AS UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE OPTIONS.' We cannot educate the next generation only in trades and vocational schools. We will lose out on untold professionals and will suffer incredibly on many fronts.
- 1.3-As parents; our school council is already finding that there is a HUGE emphasis on the trades and vocational education and NOT ENOUGH support for post-secondary academics or fine arts.
- Add 1.4 ENSURE REPRESENTATION OF CURRENT TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS WHEN UPDATING CURRICULUM.
- We need more information on how reforms will be carried out. It would be nice to see more info about a child's progress on {software communication tool used by division} instead of just in learner profiles. Would take less time for teachers; be more current and parents would be more in the loop.
- Alberta's Curriculum needs to be able to have students learn in multiple ways and be able to express themselves in different ways (EG math; there is more than one way to get the correct answer if they can show how they came to the answer and its correct they should be given credit for it).
- If changes to provincial assessment is to be considered that what is next for students; including things like test anxiety; costs vs return and the use of resources are all taken into consideration.
- Well governed & managed. Our school spends over 80% on staffing so there is limited funds for other essentials like technology upgrades that should be within the purview of appropriate funding allocations from the provincial government. Parents working Casinos should not be the basis to determine which schools can and cannot afford essential education elements like technology; field trips; etc . There should be an increase in how much schools receive per student population. Ensure the Alberta government provides increased funding to ensure all Alberta Students are successful.

Outcome Two (2): ***First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Alberta are successful***

**Key Objectives**

- 2.1 Strengthen education programs, policies and initiative for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- 2.2 Ensure First Nations students have access to the provincial education system.

- 2.3 Support school divisions to enter into education service agreements with First Nations.
- 2.4 Work with education partners to enhance First Nations, Métis and Inuit students' educational outcomes.

5) Does your school council suggest any *additions, changes or deletions* related to the *Key Objectives* above for Outcome Two?

Yes (2) No (12)

If yes, please explain:

- It is not enough to benefit FNMI with students with deepening their understanding and knowledge. We need to support all students in this arena if we are going to be truly participating in reconciliation.
- Add 2.5 Work to enhance all student and staff knowledge of FNMI history; culture and successes; historical and present.
- Our school and division in general does not have a visible First Nations population. Schools like ours could potentially use more information about this.
- 2.3 Suggest adding the specification that education service agreements be funded on a basis equal to students in the current Alberta Education system.

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Outcome Three (3): ***Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders***

**Key Objectives**

- 3.1 Support the updated teaching quality standard and the new leadership and superintendent leadership quality standards.
- 3.2 Provide guidance on the evaluation of teacher and school leader performance.
- 3.3 Support the development of the teaching workforce in areas of demand and need.
- 3.4 Enhance the level of subject matter expertise in the teacher workforce in collaboration with the Ministry or Advanced Education.

6) Does your school council suggest any *additions, changes or deletions* related to the *Key Objectives* above for Outcome Three?

Yes (6) No (8)

If yes, please explain:

- 3.2 should be removed entirely as this is covered in 3.1
- That 3.2 is taken out as there are already teaching and leadership standards that guide the evaluation of performance.
- Also; 3.3 should be changed to replace the word 'workforce' with the appropriate word 'profession'. We feel 'workforce' is a specifically chosen word designed to minimize and dilute the importance of the profession.
- 3.3 we'd like to see: '...in areas of mental health and wellness and other areas of demand and need. It is interesting that the government wants to increase subject matter expertise; but Advanced Education is narrowing its focus with its new initiatives. How much more input is this government looking to involve itself in regarding teacher and school leader performance????
- Ensure that second language teacher's standards are of high quality and that proficiency in the second language is achieved and maintained by those teachers. Provide enhanced training in special education needs for all teachers.

- Develop a plan around teacher evaluation to ensure that those teachers that are not able or willing to follow approved curriculum and proven tools around student mental health and overall well-being are weeded out or encouraged to retire. The student must remain at the center of everything not job protection or the relationships built with said teacher that is not meeting the necessary criteria.

Outcome Four (4): ***Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed***

**Key Objectives**

- 4.1 Support choice in education.
- 4.2 Fund the education system.
- 4.3 Ensure resources are being used effectively while providing more freedom for how school authorities plan and measure their work.

7) Does your school council suggest any *additions, changes* or *deletions* related to the *Key Objectives* above for Outcome Four?

Yes (11) No (3)

If yes, please explain:

- 4.1 Should be changed to 'Support choice in PUBLIC education'. Or removed entirely.
- 4.1 add ' a publicly funded; publicly administered' in front of '...education.
- 4.1 – A clear definition of what supporting choice in education means. Funding private education, and moving funding away from public schools creates a two tier education system, where socio-economic status determines access to exceptional education. Until we see the Choice in Education Act this spring, it is difficult for me to know what kind of choice in education the Business Plan supports. I understand the need for separate, private, home, charter, and public education and that they all have a role to play in fulfilling the needs of students in Alberta, but I worry about the lack of funding for initiatives like inclusive education in the public system. If more money goes to private education or their funding model changes to include pensions, infrastructure or additional funding allocated to students, more of Alberta's students will suffer.
- 4.2 Should be changed to 'Fund the PUBLIC education system'.
- 4.2 – We would like to add a section about adequately funding growth and inclusive education.
- 4.3 Risks leading to a pay for performance system. This system negatively affects poor schools and those with students with severe needs; and does nothing to ensure equitable access to public education.
- 4.3 - We hope the desire to maintain the autonomy of public school boards remains and that there is an understanding at a Provincial level that locally elected school trustees and boards know the issues facing their divisions and are best equipped to advocate for them.
- 4.4 should be added 'SUPPORT CHOICE IN PROGRAMMING WITHIN THE PUBLIC SYSTEM'.
- Funding for rural schools to provide learning opportunities to access quality education to compare with urban opportunities.
- Who is ensuring resources are being used effectively?-This outcome is very vague which is worrisome.
- Parent Involvement in education is key to overall student success.
- We believe that choice in education is a broad statement and that choice should be given to all parents in this province; however; we disagree that funding should be provided to all education systems. Public education should be funded with taxpayers' dollars and government support. Private education; however;

should be a choice that does not come with public funding as that funding takes away from the public education system.

- What the heck is this ministry doing supporting more private education?????? Our School Council supports choice in programming but public funds should support public education!!!
  - To include the support of choice in education in theory but not financially. That consistent and sustainable funding of public education is also a priority.
  - Funding must be sufficient; appropriate and without conditions. Choice in education is essential and must be supported with resources. Funding a strong basic education for ALL learners is the priority and the reason we have been so successful in the past; this cannot be compromised.
  - There is already a significant amount of choice in education in Alberta and we support maintaining the French Immersion; second language and Catholic Education. Adding more choices like charter or private schools stretches the limited funds for public education too thin.
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#### 8) Additional comments:

- We agreed that if schools are receiving public dollars they should have to follow established provincial curriculum.
  - Red deer should look at bringing back JR high. K-6 elementary (7;8;9) jr high and high school 10;11;12
  - Maintaining funding does not account for increased diversity or enrollment-We would welcome topics to discuss at our school council meetings should Alberta Ed want us to be able to suggest more 'additions; changes or deletions'-Funding should be directed towards public education. Government funding for private education should be very limited.
  - Our school council was angered by the business plan's mention of 'Choice'-while not surprising; we are still bothered by the redirection of emphasis which will end up in a tiered education system that enhances a socio-economic divide rather than negating it.
  - We just want to reiterate the importance of secured and consistent funding to public schools that allows them to meet the diverse needs of their students and although there should be a choice in education and that private schools should be able to operate with guidelines they should not be funded with public money.
  - Decrease/limit focus on building new schools in new neighborhoods.
-