



ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force – October 2021 RESULTS
15 Responses submitted (as of December 17, 2021)

Request for input regarding **Engagement and Advocacy**

1) Does your school council believe it is the role of school councils to engage with the Minister/Ministry of Education?

Yes **11 (73%)** No **2 (13%)** Unsure **2 (13%)**

Comments:

- I believe that given the current political climate (a Minister of Education and Premier who refuse to listen to the views of citizens); it is imperative that school councils engage with the Minister at every opportunity. Yes; school councils are parents reps. Not one on one; school councils should work together to bring a united message or the ministry will get conflicting messages and won't listen to anyone. Most parents I know who are on School Council just want to help out their particular school and plan activities; etc. They are not necessarily involved in politics and engaging with the ministry of education would not be a welcome task for them. Since councils represent the parents then by all means they should engage on their behalf. School councils serve a great role in advocating for students and schools alike. -If they do not engage with the ministry then the question must be asked; why is there a school council?
- School councils are one layer of consultation. It is not the role of a school council to advocate directly with the Minister/Ministry of Education. That role should be saved for our board of trustees and at the district level. School councils are an added valuable resource but the role should be reserved for parental engagement. From there school councils should report to their trustees who then advocate on behalf of the council voice of the parents for our students to advocate for what's needed in schools
- We believe that it is the role of school council to engage in some larger issues that they feel important and passionate about as a council however not for every issue and that it is better to go through ASCA to advocate those province wide issues.
- We think there should definitely be a sort of chain of command to follow for communications between school councils and the ministry of education. We do however feel that there should be an option for councils to go directly to the ministry should there be an issue they feel they've not received appropriate traction on. In some situations school councils may be concerned that their concerns would be sanitized or not properly communicated via another voice.
- We use our fantastic trustee
- We believe that it is the role of the school councils to engage with the ministry of education. However we believe that this engagement is best done through ASCA and should not be the role of individual school councils.
- I think it is very important that the minister is listening to councils; parents; teachers and having important conversations. However it has become clear that she is in fact; not listening

If No or Unsure; please explain:

- They have some role; but their voice is too small to make an impact. Communication needs to come from all levels to be effective. School councils should tell ASCA to engage with the minister.
- It is my understanding that school councils communicate with trustees who in turn communicate with ministers. I believe its the role of Administration to connect with elected officials and/or ministries. Its the role of school council to inform Administration as to what the school wants or needs.
- School councils are a volunteer committee assembled of parents who are attending a school. The input gathered at this level is very valuable and important; however; it is also subjective and driven based on what the parent population at the school council level values. School councils are one element and engagement should not reach directly to the Ministry/Minister of Education. There is incomplete representation as not all schools are a member of the ASCA in addition to many parents not even knowing the association exists. Volunteer positions should not be required to engage with elected officials

If Yes, how do you think school councils can best engage with the Minister/Ministry of Education?

- Emails directly to the Minister or Alberta Education staff: **12 (80%)**
- Phone calls directly to the Minister or Alberta Education staff: **5 (33%)**



- Invitations for the Minister or Alberta Education staff to attend school council meetings: **6 (40%)**
- Through provincial events, like ASCA conference or engagement opportunities: **12 (80%)**
- Through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram): **2 (13%)**

2) Has your school council tried to engage with the Minister/Ministry of Education in the *last two school years* (2019-2020, 2020-2021) or this year?

Yes **6 (40%)** No **8 (53%)** Unsure **1 (7%)**

Comments:

- We wrote a letter about the Draft Curriculum and the Minister of Education was sent the letter
- Indirectly. We have organized letter writing campaigns and information regarding to lack of funding for education and the inappropriateness of the proposed new curriculum.
- Our school council chair sent a letter to the superintendent to forward on to the minister of education detailing our significant concerns surrounding the k-6 draft curriculum.
- We sent in our options and feedback on the new curriculum
- I have not engaged on behalf of the council; but have tried as an individual

If Yes, was your school council successful in engaging the Minister/Ministry of Education?

Yes **0 (0%)** No **5 (56%)** Unsure **4 (44%)**

Comments:

- No response received yet.
- Automated; standard reply and no action or change of action in response
- No responses yet for this question.
- No. As of this date we've not received return communication from the minister of education. Letters coming out of the ministers office seem to be taking many months so we may still hear back. Publicly however; the minister continues to deny the extensive public pushback on this draft curriculum.
- Emails and letters were sent to the Minister; and only form responses were received. It leaves us wondering if our feedback was truly heard and acknowledged; or just disregarded.

If Yes, what method(s) did your school council use?

- Email and a survey
- Letters; emails; government surveys; phone calls

If Yes, was the engagement a positive experience for your school council?

Yes **1 (14%)** No **1 (14%)** Unsure **5 (71%)**

Comments:

- We did not receive a response from the minister

3) Does your school council believe it is the role of school councils to engage with their school division/trustee?

Yes **15 (100%)** No **0 (0%)** Unsure **0 (0%)**

Comments:

- We engage with our Trustee and division leaders on all issues we have.
- Our school division has a great relationship between parents through to senior administration and trustees. We have 'Networks Meetings' where a representative from parent councils of all division schools attend an open meeting with admin and trustees. Because of these meetings I feel we work much more cohesively toward the same important goals.
- We have enjoyed working with Terry. He has seemed open to listening to our concerns that so many invaluable supports are being taken out of schools

If No or Unsure, please explain:

- No volunteer positions should not be required to engage with elected officials



If Yes, how do you think school councils can best engage with their school division/trustee?

- Emails directly to their school division/trustee: **14 (93%)**
- Phone calls directly to their school division/trustee: **8 (53%)**
- Invitations for their school division/trustee to attend school council meetings: **15 (100%)**
- Through division events, like Council of (or division wide) School Councils meetings/events: **13 (87%)**
- Through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram): **1 (7%)**
- Other: **1 (7%)**
 - Networks meetings; discussed above.

4) Has your school council tried to engage with its school division/trustee in the **last school year** (2020-2021) or this year?

Yes **13 (86%)** No **1 (7%)** Unsure **1 (7%)**

Comments:

- Regarding inadequacy of covid restrictions and precautions at school as of august 2020 going into the school year.
- Was unable to make the meeting
- We have really positive communication between the different stakeholders in our children's educations. Our senior administration and trustees are consistently easily accessible; eager and approachable.
- Always a pleasure

5) If Yes to the above, was your school council successful in engaging its school division/trustee?

Yes **12 (86%)** No **1 (7%)** Unsure **1 (7%)**

Comments:

- They replied and called back but did not see our point of view until the day before school started (to at least bring back masking).
- Our trustee Sherry Cooper attends the majority of our monthly meetings.
- Just gave notes on an emergency meeting they had earlier that day. No chance for any questions.
- I would hope that trustees engage with parents both in the school council capacity; as well as through direct communication. Sadly our incumbents have neglected this in the past term and continue to cherry pick who they respond to.
- 50% YES 50% UNSURE

If yes, what method(s) did your school council use?

- Emails; attending a council meeting.
- Email, phone and invitation to attend school council meeting
- Email
- Invitation to meeting
- The same trustee comes to each of our School Council Meetings for a year so we get to know them well. Emails phone calls and meetings invites to Trustee
- Trustee attended school council meetings. Attend school council meetings. Invites to council
- We have a city-wide meeting that all school councils are able to attend that our council attends regularly.
- After surveying member parents we presented and submitted their responses at a school board meeting.
- Invitations to attend School Council meetings; emails.
- Meeting

If yes, was the engagement a positive experience for your school council?

Yes **11 (79%)** No **2 (14%)** Unsure **1 (7%)**

Comments:

- Our Trustee only really says what he thinks is politically correct; rather than actually having meaningful discussion with us. The Trustee is happy to attend meetings and meet with council; but is not able to



take concrete action to support our requests or concerns. For example; regarding covid restrictions and precautions at school as of august 2020 going into the school year. they would not change their policies because of our opinion. They told us to trust our government and that they would follow.

- No ability to question trustee
- 50% YES 50% UNSURE. The question of 'was this a positive experience' is subjective by design. Did the engagement result in the outcome wanted or did the experience make you feel good? This set of questions are flawed by design. If the outcome didn't result in the desired school council decision than it could be viewed as not a positive experience when perhaps the request was beyond scope of the school council to ask.
- Yes and it is easy and accessible for all school councils to attend and to engage with the other schools and school trustees.
- We are updated on our board of trustees activities and how they pertain to our school. Our trustee will also actively engage in our meeting and provides a board's perspective to matters when it is appropriate.
- With the newly elected Trustees entering their roles; the Chair of our Council will be sending our Trustee representative an introduction letter. This letter will welcome them to our school community; as well as share some expectations we have of their role - for example: they are welcome to attend every meeting; their report will be first item on the agenda; they may choose to stay for the entire duration of the meeting afterwards; or may leave; we allot them up to 10 minutes to share pertinent information with our school; we would appreciate a written report to be shared for the Minutes of our meeting; we will have a Focus Engagement Question; developed by our Council; for the Trustees to discuss at each meeting. For example - what current work is being done regarding the draft curriculum.

6) In the past year, for which of the following has your school council seen ASCA advocate? (*Check all that apply*)

- Test, Trace, Isolate: **10 (71%)**
- Appropriate health and safety measures/protocols in schools: **12 (85%)**
- Adequate Funding: **11 (79%)**
- Class Sizes: **10 (71%)**
- Mental Health support for students and teachers: **9 (64%)**
- Delayed implementation of the Draft K-6 Curriculum: **13 (93%)**
- Pause on mandatory Standardized Testing (PATs, DIPs): **9 (64%)**
- Other: **1 (7%)**
 - Now that class sizes have been dropped from the Education Act we feel that this important issue has been forgotten about. Class sizes are not the only consideration. Classroom complexity should play an important role as well. We recognize that covid and the draft k-6 curriculum has absorbed a significant amount of the publics energy.

7) How effective does your school council believe ASCA has been this past year in bringing broad/public awareness to the advocacy positions of ASCA Member School Councils? (1 = Not at all effective; 5 = Very effective)

1 **1 (7%)** 2 **2 (13%)** 3 **6 (40%)** 4 **4 (26%)** 5 **1 (7%)** Unsure 1 **(7%)**

Please help us to understand your school council's answer: (*optional – received 7 responses*)

- ASCA's resources have been cut which limits their effectiveness. However; I see ASCA in the news; particularly advocating around the draft k-6 curriculum.
- ASCA seems to not take a side at times. It just posts quotes from the Ministry. Advocacy is taking a side and advocating for it. Not just educating or informing. We want to know how the majority of councils feel and be able to go to ASCA to find out. While ASCA has a voice; it doesn't seem to be the voice that Government listens to most. Mostly just hear about ASCA at council meetings.
- I think groups such as Support our Schools are more vocal than ASCA. The government is going to check the box on consultation and do what it set out in its election platform; e.g.; new K-6 curriculum



- 25% 1; 25% 2; 25% 3; 25% 5 (no selections for 4). As an active parent in school council for that last six years I know who the ASCA is and subscribe to information. However; there are many parents who do not understand that school councils and the ASCA are connected and additionally; school councils must become active members to be part of the association. While the ASCA is an active association with a mandate to advocate for education in Alberta the association is funded through membership and also receives funds from the Government of Alberta. The association is valuable in the process but must become more transparent around motivations and political alignment. By being membership based there are many school councils who are not members of the association therefore true communication to the Ministry/Minister of Education is incomplete and not representative of every parent within the Province of Alberta. Another committee to advise other committees... example of top heavy institution
 - Your social media campaigns are clean; easy to follow and provide the right amount of information to be introduced to the advocacy issue
 - Middle ground because there is always improvement to be made. We feel that where ASCA receives funding from the provincial government you are somewhat tied to how much you can say in opposition to the government.
 - We have had almost a full board change over in the last year.
- 8) What advocacy positions does your school council believe ASCA should focus on in 2021-2022? *(Check all that apply)*
- Mental Health support for students: **13 (87%)**
 - Mental Health support for teachers: **12 (80%)**
 - Smaller Class Sizes: **10 (67%)**
 - Support for Complex Classrooms: **11 (73%)**
 - Funding Student Population Growth: **6 (40%)**
 - Funding for adequate Technology: **6 (40%)**
 - Continuation of Health and Safety measures/protocols: **7 (47%)**
 - Delayed implementation of the Draft K-6 Curriculum: **12 (80%)**
 - Pause on mandatory Standardized Testing (PATs, DIPs): **4 (27%)**
 - Other: **2 (13%)**
 - Our school council and student body is unique as it represents homeschooling/alternate programming. Our main issue is continued and increased funding to all homeschool providers and parents to support children's educational needs. As well; our council would like to see the lessening and or removal of synchronous teaching time.
 - We would like very much for ASCA to advocate against the re-implementation of grade 3 PAT's or SLA's
- 9) What methods does your school council believe ASCA should use to advocate for school councils, parents, and students in 2021-2022? *(Check all that apply)*
- Letters to the Minister/Ministry of Education: **12 (80%)**
 - Meetings with the Minister/Ministry of Education: **14 (93%)**
 - School council engagement opportunities with the Minister/Ministry of Education: **12 (80%)**
 - Letters to Education Partners and Stakeholders: **9 (60%)**
 - Education Partners and Stakeholder meetings: **10 (67%)**
 - Partnering with Education Partners and/or Stakeholders on common concerns using public campaigns: **10 (67%)**
 - Media releases and/or interviews: **9 (60%)**
 - ASCA social media platforms: **9 (60%)**
 - Initiate letter-writing campaigns for ASCA Member School Councils to utilize: **5 (33%)**
 - Initiate petitions for ASCA Member School Councils to sign: **5 (33%)**
 - Other: **0 (0%)**



- Although we think they are all ways are good ways to engage and can be effective to use several different ways. The ones we ticked off are what we feel are the best ways.
- We're concerned that there may be some expense of media releases in particular may not have a good financial return.
- We believe that partnership and engagement are the most effective advocacy methods.
- All of these. The more ways to get issues in front of her; the better

10) Does your school council engage with ASCA using any of the following methods? (*Choose all that apply*)

- Subscribe to E-news: **12 (80%)**
- Follow on Facebook: **7 (47%)**
- Follow on Twitter: **6 (40%)**
- Regularly check ASCA website for updates: **12 (80%)**
- Emails to ASCA President, Board of Directors: **2 (13%)**
- Through ASCA staff for school council services and/or support: **9 (60%)**
- Other: **1 (7%)**
 - attending general conference