

The association for parents in education ... Your link to what's going on in education today

From the President's Desk



I have seen my share of parents sitting at provincial advisory tables over the years, often surrounded by highly educated professionals and faced with complex topics of discussion. And I never cease to be impressed by how much we, as parents, always have to offer! Our contributions include widely varied

life and work experience, innovative ideas, a host of refreshingly common sense questions. So often, it is the inherent ability of a parent to bring the issue back to what is most important – while many rely so heavily on working things through in their heads, we sometimes just know in our hearts what feels right for the kids.

I know how much energy it takes parents to stay well informed and involved in striving for improvements in our education system. That's why I'm proud to serve an association where our members keep abreast of the issues and keep working day after day, year after year, in partnership, to find solutions to challenges and to keep Alberta's students at the top nationally and internationally. Thanks to each of you for your very unique, personal contributions to the learning of your child/ren and the improvement of your schools!

I'd like to update you on two exciting review processes that AHSCA is participating in, right now, in our role of ensuring a "parent voice" on provincial level discussions.

Commission on Learning

At the Future Summit last February, I remember being excited about the idea of a full scale review of the province's K-12 system; the first since 1972. Of course that idea led to the Commission on Learning.

I am pleased to report that, on behalf of members, to date AHSCA has participated right from the beginning. This included providing input to Minister Oberg on the commission's composition, timelines and terms of reference last Spring, and making an informal presentation to the Commission in August. We are now preparing our Formal Written Submission, which will be presented to the Commission on January 11, 2003.

Have you completed a workbook yet? While AHSCA is providing the "provincial parent voice", it is vitally important that parents provide individual, local and regional views. **Make sure the commission hears from YOU!**



NEW Funding Framework Proposed!

- Accountability
- Consistency
- Equity
- Flexibility
- Predictability/Stability
- Transparency
- Minimize Administration



These are the seven principles underlying a proposed new, improved funding framework for the K-12 system.

Chaired by Minister Oberg, the *Technical Review of Funding* committee has involved major education partners, since June, to review the current funding system and propose improvements. The goals: ensure **fair and equitable distribution of available resources**, as well as **flexibility that school boards need** to meet local priorities. The focus was limited to funds distribution, not the adequacy of funding.

The current funding framework for public and separate schools has been in place since 1995, despite a number of reviews of its elements since that time.

The proposed new model would retain base funding to school boards, and in addition would create a unique "profile" for each school division, to reflect its specific needs. A variety of funding "categories" would contribute to the jurisdiction's profile. For example, *enrolment growth or decline; severe disability numbers; small schools by necessity; cost of living allowance; aboriginal student numbers*, and a variety of other relevant factors would contribute to each profile.

Minister Oberg will take the proposed funding framework to the Standing Policy Committee level in November. Once government approval is granted, a transition phase would allow jurisdictions planning time to adapt to these changes.

How to access a Workbook...

Get there from AHSCA's website: www.ahsca.ab.ca
click on the **Learning Commission link**.

**Deadline for workbook submissions
is December 6, 2002!**

2002-2003

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Message from New Executive Director

Hello Everyone!

On behalf of my better half, Bev, and our daughters, Melissa (Grade 10), and Abbey (Grade 7) who are both enrolled in Elk Island Public schools, thank you for the opportunity to join AHSCA.

I started my career fresh out of university in 1980, and have worked for two of Canada's larger corporations, Imperial Oil and Telus through the majority of that time. My main focal areas were issues management, strategic planning, public and government relations, regulatory affairs, governance, marketing, and building relationships. I also had the privilege of working for the Edmonton Public School Board from 1992 to 1994, as the Director of Communications. It was a great experience working with the dedicated folks there!



On the AHSCA front, since late August I have met and spoken with many wonderful people. It must be contagious in education! This includes members, other parents, and our partners ASBA, ATA, ASBOA, CASS and Alberta Learning. It is abundantly clear that a quality public education system in Alberta is of critical importance. We do indeed have a good one, and with energy, determination, honesty, and a commitment to positive relationships, the sky is the limit in making Alberta's public education system *even better*.

Since 1929, AHSCA has been actively ensuring a "Parents' Provincial Voice in Education". We have come a long way, and the journey ahead of us will take continued hard work and dedication. Even in this short time working with the Board of Directors, I can tell you, hard work and dedication are the individual and collective strengths of this organization.

In charting our long-term journey, we have embarked on developing and initiating a number of strategic initiatives. You will be hearing more about the progress of these in the coming months, including the 2002-2006 Strategic Business Plan, enhanced communications and marketing, member services, board governance, committee and workshop co-ordination, and partner relations.

Hats off to those of you who care and find the time to be truly involved! The valuable effort and time you commit to furthering the provincial parents' voice in education is absolutely amazing! It is a distinct honour and privilege to serve on your behalf, and I look forward to listening to you, our members, thinking of the words of Benjamin Disraeli, "*There is no wisdom like frankness.*"

Take care, Rick Preston



Our newest staff member is Pat Newton. Pat has a background in nursing and as a former owner and editor of a small town weekly newspaper, Pat brings a wealth of life experience to the office. Additionally she served two terms as a Town Councillor in Bowden, being very aware of and involved in all community issues including the local school.

"I have always enjoyed working with groups and organizations and being part of making things happen on the local, provincial and even federal levels," Pat said. "From medical facilities to Olds College and municipal government, I find it interesting and rewarding to be part of the team whether as a member or as staff."

Prior to moving to Alberta and recently to Edmonton, Pat hails from Manitoba with a grown family of three children and is a very proud grandma of one and one on the way.

Government Responds to AHSCA Policies

Through resolutions, you, the members of AHSCA, create Policy. Policy enables the Association to communicate what we value and believe in as a unified group of parents. Why are resolutions so important? They are the lifeblood of the Association, defining a stand upon which to base decisions and discussions, providing reason for actions, and formalising our provincial parents' perspective.

At the 2002 AHSCA annual general meeting, *you* created 15 new AHSCA Policies! On paper, they are only words, however, putting those words into action to accomplish desired results is truly what is important. So, outlined below are these newest policies and the actions taken and/or planned, to ensure we are working on your behalf to positively influence education.

NEXT STEPS FOR EVERY NEW POLICY

- AHSCA representatives to promote policies at appropriate advisory meetings and forums; ongoing
- Incorporate into AHSCA presentation to Learning Commission, Jan. 2003

02C-1 INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION & FABRICATION OF TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM

AHSCA requests a one-time grant and ongoing financial support to Construction and Fabrication Technology Programs

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

Alberta Learning is conducting a review of the education funding method and formula to ensure they continue to support the underlying principles of equity, flexibility, and simplicity for all school jurisdictions. A representative from AHSCA has been invited to participate on the Technical Review of Funding Committee.

The Education Commission will conduct a broad review of the learning system as a whole. The review has students at its centre, therefore, all matters that have a bearing on student success will be considered. AHSCA has been invited to provide input into the composition, terms of reference and the reporting period for the Education Commission. AHSCA will have the opportunity to provide input to the Commission.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

02C-2 AFFORDABLE POST SECONDARY FEES FOR ALBERTA FAMILIES

AHSCA requests that tuition fees at Alberta Universities and post-secondary institutions be set so they are amongst the lowest third of those in Canada.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

Tuition fees at Alberta's post-secondary institutions are governed by the province's Tuition Fee Policy which regulates average annual increases and sets a 30% cap on students' contribution toward the institutional cost of delivering their education. The Tuition Fee Policy is currently under review to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of both students and institutions.

Alberta's Tuition Fee Policy is based on the principle that the cost of post-secondary education is a shared responsibility among students, their parents, and the government. Extensive research has shown that it is fair to expect students and their families to pay up to 30% of the institutional cost of delivering their education. Tuition fees

Government is committed to ensuring that financial need is not a barrier to further education. Alberta has chosen to invest in what is arguably the most comprehensive student assistance program available in Canada and Alberta's students who require assistance graduate with among the lowest average debt. Grants, scholarships and bursaries are available to reduce the amount high-need students have to borrow.

Through the Loan Relief Program, introduced in August 2001, government repays, on behalf of a qualifying student, a portion of their provincial student loans. A student becomes eligible when their combined Alberta and Canada Student Loans reach \$5,000 per year or \$2,500 per semester. Amounts greater than this that a student has borrowed through a government loan make eligible for

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Alberta's Tuition Fee Policy is based on the principle that the cost of post-secondary education is a shared responsibility among students, their parents, and the government. Extensive research has shown that it is fair to expect students and their families to pay up to 30% of the institutional cost of delivering their education. Tuition fees at Alberta's institutions are very comparable to those in other provinces. Average tuition fees for arts undergraduate degree programs at public universities in Alberta are within 50% of those in most other jurisdictions. Provinces like British Columbia, where tuition fees have been frozen or kept very low, are now substantially increasing tuition fees to match the national average.

Through the Loan Relief Program, introduced in August 2001, government repays, on behalf of a qualifying student, a portion of their provincial student loans. A student becomes eligible when their combined Alberta and Canada Student Loans reach \$5,000 per year or \$2,500 per semester. Amounts greater than this that a student has borrowed through a government loan maybe repaid by government on behalf of the student.

Grants and loan remission programs ensure that the neediest students receive substantial assistance, rather than slightly reducing costs for everyone, including those who can afford to pay, through a tuition freeze or reduction. The accessibility of post-secondary education in Alberta remains high: enrolment grew by more than 5% between 2000/01 and 2001/02.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002
Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors

RESPONSIBILITY OF MEETING CHILDREN'S BASIC NEEDS FOR LEARNING

AHSCA urges the Minister of Children's Services to deal with the issues of proper nutrition and proper clothing for children in the home so the children can come prepared to learn at school on a daily basis.

If it is determined that the school is to be the best place to deliver these services, we request that the ministries of Children's Services, Infrastructure and Learning make sure that the proper funding, staff and facilities are in place so the cost and work load is not downloaded onto the school community and school staff.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

Alberta Children's Services is aware that poverty is a key determinant of health and well-being. The primary responsibility for children and youth lies with parents and caregivers; therefore, Children's Services works with families, communities, service providers, all Albertans, and levels of government to put children and youth first. To assist families, significant resources have been directed toward the following programs and initiatives:

- *Over the next year, Alberta Children's Services will begin to implement a number of significant changes, collectively referred to as the Alberta Response Model, to better address the needs of youth, children and families served by Child Welfare.*
- *A review of the Child Welfare Act was announced on May 23, 2001. Public consultations were held across the province and the results are being compiled and recommendations for changes will be brought forward.*
- *The Child Care Subsidy Program assists low-income working families with child care costs for their pre-school children attending licensed daycare centers or family day homes. The maximum subsidy amount has been increased and ranges from \$380 to \$475 per month depending on the age of the child. The subsidy currently benefits over 12,000 children.*
- *Through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Program, funds are provided to municipalities and the Metis Settlements to enable them to develop programs and services designed to meet the specific needs of their communities. FCSS has received a \$15*

million increase to the 2002/2003 budget in recognition of the strength the program brings to supporting children, families and communities.

- *A second Children's Forum was held on October 2 to 3, 2001 to continue the good work, which occurred in 1999, as a result of the First Children's Forum. In preparation for the Forum, a booklet entitled, Commitment to Action: Improving the Quality of Life of Alberta's Children, was prepared. This booklet lists the actions undertaken by ministries since 1999.*
- *Children with unique and complex needs are jointly served by the partnering Ministries of Children's Services, Health and Wellness and Learning. Those needs not addressed by existing programs or policies will be addressed through the collaboration of Children's Services and the partnering ministries.*

Alberta Children's Services is also an active participant in federal, provincial and territorial initiatives.

- *The Early Childhood Development Initiative agreed to by First Ministers will enable Alberta to build on its existing base of early intervention and family support programs. This initiative focuses on supports to parents of children aged zero to six. A report on Alberta's investments and expenditures will be released later this month.*
- *The national Child Benefit is a program where governments are working together to reduce the depth of child poverty and to encourage parental participation in the workforce.*

Alberta Infrastructure is designing new buildings with community programs as part of their focus. For example, a new school is being built in Inner City Edmonton with room to accommodate a clothing exchange.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors

02C-4 FUNDING FOR SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL FOOD PROGRAMS

- School nutritional food programs become eligible for funding under the provincial Student Health Initiative (SHI)
 - Structures be set up so schools can communicate, in confidence, the nutritional needs of their "at risk" students in an efficient and effective manner, so nutritional support can be made available in an expedient fashion;
 - ~~schools and jurisdictions~~ work in cooperation with other partners to meet the nutritional needs of all students "at risk";
- The Ministers of Learning, Children's Services, and Health and Wellness, provide funding when necessary, to address, at the least, the nutritional needs of hungry and poorly nourished K - 9 students in Alberta's schools; and be prepared to provide said funding as early as the 2002-2003 school year.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

Ensuring that the nutritional needs of students are met is very important; however, the Student Health Initiative (SHI) was not developed for that purpose. The goal of the SHI is to improve access to and enhance the provision of integrated health and related support services for children with special health needs so that they can participate fully in their education programs to attain their potential and be successful at learning. This includes children with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, neurological

disorders, sensory impairments, medical conditions, and/or emotional/behavioural disabilities who are registered in school programs from Early Childhood Services (ECS) through Grade 12. Services eligible for funding include speech-language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, respiratory therapy, nursing, and emotional/behavioural supports. Some of the students who access emotional/behavioural services from Student Health services may be children who are at-risk.

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Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors

02C-5 STUDENT HEALTH INITIATIVE (SHI) PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY

AHSCA requests that Alberta Learning ensure that the Provincial Working Group assume the authority they need to enforce that local SHIPs adhere to the 'SHI Principles' and 'Seven Required Components of the Service Plan'.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

Each year since the announcement of the Student Health Initiative (SHI), partnerships have been required to submit a service plan outlining the plan for delivering student health services. The Provincial Working Group reviews the service plans and approves them based on partnerships meeting the requirements as set out in the Student Health

Partnership Service Plan Guidelines. Alberta Learning has a representative on the Provincial Working Group that reviews and approves the plans for every Student Health Partnership.

Student Health Partnerships are accountable to the provincial partners (Alberta Learning, Alberta Health & Wellness, Alberta Children's Services and the Alberta

Mental Health Board) for delivering student health services according to the Student Health Partnership Service Plan Guidelines.

Student Health Partnerships also submit annual reports in accordance with reporting requirements. The Provincial Working Group that includes an Alberta Learning representative reviews the annual reports and ensures that submissions demonstrate adherence to guidelines and expectations.

Student Health Partnerships make decisions about service priorities and the allocation of SHI resources based on their own local needs assessment processes. Student Health Partnerships are accountable for making the most effective use of the available SHI resources.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors

02C-15 TEXTBOOK AND WORKBOOK FEES

AHSCA urges Alberta Learning to ensure that grade 1-12 students cannot be charged a rental fee textbooks, and that workbooks taking the place of textbooks be provided at no cost.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

At the present time, Alberta Learning does not have any plans to change section 60(2)(j) of the School Act (RSA, 2000) that allows school boards to charge a parent fees with respect to instructional supplies or materials.

The provincial funding framework provides money to school boards who decide how and where to apply their education funds. Boards are responsible for ensuring that all their students receive the instruction and resources necessary for them to succeed. Local school boards make decisions about the provision of resources for specific programs and services in consultation with parents, school staff, and administrators in keeping with the needs of the community. The ability to make decisions on charging of fees provides boards with the flexibility to address local needs.

No student can be denied access to basic education in Alberta. Whether fees are waived or unpaid, schools are expected to provide the student with access to the required materials and supplies.

In response to concerns about school fees from parents, the Minister asked the Alberta School Boards' Association (ASBA) to look into the issue. After consulting with school boards across the province, ASBA developed a Policy Advisory – School Fees to assist school boards in establishing appropriate local policies. These guidelines support keeping fees as low as possible; boards consulting with school principals, staff, school councils and parents in setting fees; and waiving fees for students whose families cannot afford to pay them.

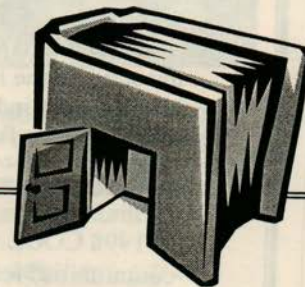
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Thanks to one of our Edmonton Public school members for drawing our attention to the availability of the summary and results of the School Facility Evaluation Project, at www.infras.gov.ab.ca.

Initiated in 1999, the School Facility Evaluation Project addressed Recommendation 2 of the School Facilities Task Force (SFTF). (All 41 SFTF recommendations are also available on the site.) Evaluations were conducted on 1,463 schools. To find the one/s that interest you, click on **Schools**, then under **Reviewing and Monitoring** – click on **School Facility Audits** to see a list of school divisions. Choose the one you're looking for and then the individual school. Two evaluation reports are available on each school – an Executive Summary and a Condition report.



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Also under **Reviewing and Monitoring** – check out the **Facility Evaluation Summary**, outlining the mandate, process, performance measures, cost and intended use of the audit information, including raw scores of each evaluated school.



AHSCA's accountability and conditional grant agreement with the Minister of Learning, for a five year term to August 2007 was ratified by members in April 2002.

This agreement was the result of numerous years of advocacy and dialogue between AHSCA and Alberta Learning representatives. The agreement provides for continued to

The plan encompasses the following key elements:

Purpose: To support AHSCA in sustaining its ability to continue to provide *basic* services and *enhance* and *extend* services that will contribute to the improved effectiveness of the education system by achieving outcomes that reflect goals common to AHSCA and Alberta Learning.

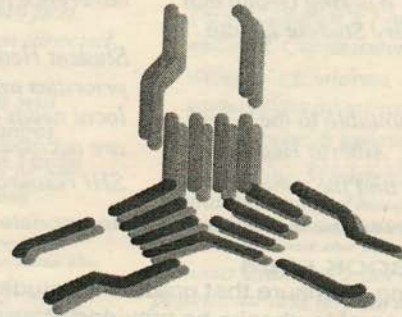
Accountability: AHSCA will provide to the Minister of Learning an annual plan to include outcomes and measures. In plain English, this means we will communicate what we plan to achieve (long and short term) and how we will measure it to track our progress.

Long Term Outcomes to be demonstrated: AHSCA achieves excellence in services to its membership. Parents are consistently effective school council members, and many are skilled, knowledgeable leaders within their school communities. AHSCA provides a parent voice to assist government in its consulting and collaborative work with

Measures to be used:

- member satisfaction
- services utilization
- membership levels
- in-service participation rates
- policy input adopted

The 2002-2003 Plan, once approved by the Minister, will be made available through the AHSCA website and publications.



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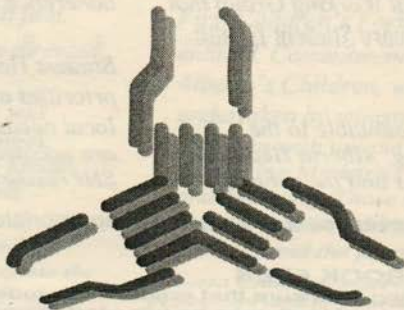
This agreement was the result of numerous years of advocacy and dialogue between AHSCA and Alberta Learning representatives. The agreement provides your association with a solid footing on which to go forward and continue to clearly articulate a provincial perspective in policy arenas.

The plan encompasses the following key elements:

Purpose: To support AHSCA in sustaining its ability to continue to provide *basic* services and *enhance and extend* services that will contribute to the improved effectiveness of the education system by achieving outcomes that reflect goals common to AHSCA and Alberta Learning.

Accountability: AHSCA will provide to the Minister of Learning an annual plan to include outcomes and measures. In plain English, this means we will communicate what we plan to achieve (long and short term) and how we will measure it to track our progress.

Long Term Outcomes to be demonstrated: AHSCA achieves excellence in services to its membership. Parents are consistently effective school council members, and many are skilled, knowledgeable leaders within their school communities. AHSCA provides a parent voice to assist government in its consulting and collaborative work with members, and finally, AHSCA has organizational sustainability.



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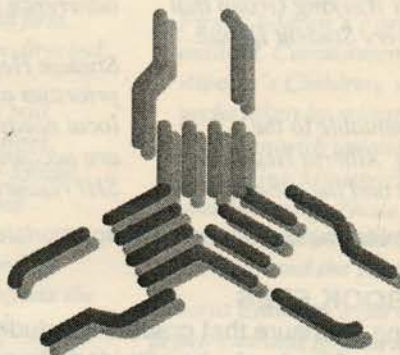
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In 1998 COOL was introduced in Manning and in 2001 in Spruce Grove. Adapting the Whitecourt program to other communities required many weeks of work by these same parent volunteers in order to ensure that the program would operate effectively. During this same time, hours were also spent in ensuring that the Whitecourt program continued to run smoothly."

Well said Irene! We now join the many people at Hilltop in knowing how dedicated these parents have been to this wonderful program over the years. Enough can never be said for the enormous contribution volunteers make to our children, our schools and ultimately our communities. Thank you for bringing this update to our attention as at AHSCA we are always happy to salute school volunteers and their extraordinary contributions!

Minister Listened to Education Partners

"The Integrated Occupational Program (IOP) is designed for students who learn best through experiences that integrate academic skills in occupational contexts." IOP programs require specialized equipment and resources for student support and assessment.

In February 2002, the partially completed work of two IOP advisory committees, made up of all the major education stakeholders, was put on hold indefinitely by the Minister of Learning. The reasoning was that many IOP revisions should wait until work on a "renewed vision" within the Learning department was complete.

AHSCA responded with a strong protest to the Minister, prepared by committee rep., Calgary parent, Val McGill, and President Marilyn Fisher. We also joined our other partners (trustees, teachers, superintendents and business officials) in a collective request that the Minister reverse his decision.

In June of 2002, Minister Oberg responded positively, indicating he had clearly heard the stakeholders' message. He provided them with directions for continued work on Integrated Occupational Program improvement.

The two previous advisory groups are being combined into one committee. The Integrated Occupational Program Curriculum and Assessment Advisory Committee will provide advice to the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Basic Learning as well as System Improvement and Reporting.

The committee will be addressing:

- revisions to IOP programs of study
- selection and/or development of teaching resources
- development of assessment strategies, and
- transition strategies to employment and further training for IOP students.

Opportunity for keen Resource Parent

AHSCA has been invited to appoint a representative to provide the parents' provincial voice on this committee.

Interested? Are you...

- a parent from a member school or an individual member,
- willing to speak to AHSCA policy at the committee table and in the absence of policy, speak to what is in the best interest of the student,
- prepared to bring information back to the AHSCA Board of Directors for their information and input,
- able to attend 8-10 meetings between now and August of 2004 (reimbursement for travel and subsistence to attend meetings).

Please contact Tracy at the AHSCA Office 1-800-661-3470. The parent of an IOP student may be particularly suited to this position, but a keen interest in the topic is more important.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CONFERENCE

Projects from the Heart - Keeping the Dream Alive



January 30 & 31, 2003 - Calgary

\$ Funding support for 600 participants, including parents \$

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) welcomes anyone who provides input to and benefits from School Improvement projects to celebrate the difference AISI projects are making in the lives of students!

Parental involvement is one of the keystones of school improvement. As members of AISI teams, parents are welcome to attend this conference. Sessions will be of interest for the entire education community.

AISI is a 'bold approach to supporting the improvement of student learning by encouraging teachers, parents and the community to work collaboratively to introduce innovative and creative initiatives. The heart of AISI philosophy is the understanding that "by working together in our school communities, we can help children do even better. We are striving for a culture of continuous improvement for our children and for ourselves as we help them to be successful as learners."

TO REGISTER: Please contact your superintendent or AISI coordinator.

More information also available at Alberta Learning's School Improvement branch: 310-0000 (780) 415-0767 and on the following website: www.quasar.ualberta.ca/AISI/provincialhome.htm

Update structures by strengthening the ability for parents to really 'provide' input (not just be given opportunities).

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

- a) creating a new bullet under 'Required Components of the Service Plan' numbers 2 through 6 inclusive that would require effective parent input or creating a new 'required' component number 8 that would detail the expected parent involvement in all appropriate components of the Service Plan

The Service Plan Guidelines for 2002/2003 have been revised in several areas to clarify the role of parents.

Page 6 states the following: "Families and relevant stakeholders must have the opportunity for input in the planning process and development of the Student Health Partnerships Service Plan. The Partnership is expected to facilitate this involvement."

- b) changing the "Student Health Partnership Profile" to add 2.7 "an identified parent representative"

The Service Plan Guidelines for 2002/2003 identify that the partnership is expected to facilitate the involvement of parents who wish to be involved. Student Health Partnerships have been encouraged to utilize parent representatives on partnership committees.

- c) changing 3.1 of the "Student Health Needs and Services Priorities" from "have opportunities for input" to read 'provide input'

As in b) above, Government cannot require that there be a parent representative on each of the partnerships as parents need to have the opportunity to determine if they wish to be involved.

- d) changing 3.2 of the "Student Health Needs and Services Priorities" to require that needs assessments must include all stakeholders especially parents, teachers, and professional service providers employed outside the health/education system, wait lists, severity levels and preschool children

Page 9 of the Service Plan Guidelines for 2002/2003 now requires that each partnership identify the process for gathering the needs assessment information. Each individual partnership determines how they gather the information and they identify who participates in the needs assessment. Where applicable, partnerships are encouraged to include parents in each of the components of the service plan. Student Health Partnerships have demonstrated that they have processes in place to gather parent input.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

- e) changing 3.3 of the "Student Health Needs and Services Priorities" to read 'The service priorities, based on an assessment of student health needs, service gaps and consultation with parents and service providers, must... and 'reasons students with special health needs may be unable to access or have not received effective services' and that priorities be determined by all stakeholders, including parents, teachers, service providers

Page 9, Section 4.1 of the Service Plan Guidelines for 2002/2003 includes information on identifying parameters to exclude eligible students in order to make the most effective use of Student Health Initiative resources.

- f) changing 4.1 "Goals" to read 'school-aged children with special health needs receive a range of coordinated health and related support services to meet their needs.'

Partnerships must ensure that children have access to a range of services to meet their individual needs; however, some students with special health needs may not need to receive a range of services to meet their needs.

- g) changing 5.1.2 "Performance Measures, Targets and Strategies" to include the number of hours of service and the type of service (e.g., Individual, group consultation, direct etc.)

The Service Plan Guidelines for 2002/2003 have been revised to clarify and assist partnerships in developing performance measures, targets and strategies. Page 11, Section 6.1.2 now includes a number of examples, including the numbers of hours of service and the types of services provided. Each partnership then collaboratively develops their performance measures and targets for the coming year.

Student Health Partnerships have been encouraged to develop processes for parent input in a variety of ways such as:

- recruiting parent/family representatives who represent a broad range of students with health needs to act in an advisory capacity;
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- utilizing parent representation on partnership committees

RESPONSE

02C-9 ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE APPEAL PROCESS FOR STUDENT HEALTH INITIATIVE (SHI)

Put an effective appeal process in place immediately that would be a standard, required component for all SHIPs.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

The Student Health Partnership Service Plan Guidelines require that Student Health Partnerships have an accessible dispute resolution process in place for students, parents, service providers, and partner organizations. All Student Health Partnerships have satisfied this requirement.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors



RESPONSE

02C-6 STUDENT HEALTH INITIATIVE (SHI) PARENT REPRESENTATION

AHSCA requests the creation of a position(s) for a parent(s) representative on the SHI Provincial Working Group and each SHIP across the province, and Update structures by strengthening the ability for parents to really 'provide' input (not just be given opportunities).

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SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors



ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

The Student Health Initiative funding allocation model uses student enrolment information for children registered in Alberta Learning programs from Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 as a basis for determining how the funds will be distributed to Student Health Partnerships. These include children with mild/moderate and severe

disabilities as outlined by Alberta Learning's established definitions. Alberta Learning is currently reviewing the definitions for students with mild/moderate disabilities, based on recommendations from *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta* released in November 2000.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

02C-8 DETERMINE AN ACCURATE NEEDS BASELINE AND PROVIDE FUNDING BASED ON NEEDS FOR STUDENT HEALTH INITIATIVE (SHI)

Undertake a needs assessment involving all stakeholders including parents and private service providers that would accurately reflect children's needs in the services targeted by the SHI, in particular speech-language and occupational therapy services. And secure additional (adjusted to inflation/cost of doing business) funds from the provincial government to provide effective services to those students in need

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

Since the special health needs of children vary in each partnership, all Student Health Partnerships complete a needs assessment to ensure that student health services are based on assessed needs and provided to achieve specific results. The Student Health Partnerships use the collected information from their partners and stakeholders to set their priorities and allocate resources.

As part of the accountability process, partnerships are required to identify continuous improvement activities in the annual reports. One of the requirements in the Annual Report Guidelines for 2001/2002 is for partnerships to

identify continuous improvement activities that are already underway to address more effective and efficient use of Student Health Initiative (SHI) funding and existing 1998/1999 (baseline) resources. The provincial partners are also compiling information from Student Health Partnerships to identify where gaps in services still exist.

In May 2001, a one-time funding of \$844,000 was provided in addition to 2000/2001 budget allocation. The funding allocation for the 2001/2002 school year was \$28,137,720. The funding allocation for the 2002/2003 school year has been increased by 0.9% to \$28,398,772. The provincial partners will continue to advocate for resources for the SHI to address unmet student health needs.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

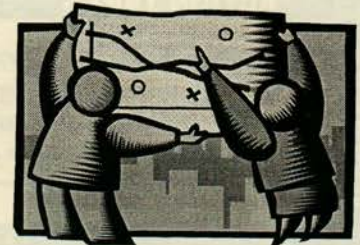
Strategically Speaking...

Strategy is the unique and sustainable way by which an organization creates value.

During the past year, the AHSCA Board of Directors has been working on the development and ultimate implementation of a Strategic Business Plan (SBP) for the timeframe 2002-2006. Creating value for you, our members, has been fundamental to all discussions.

The framework of the plan has been completed, which involved Guiding Statements, Core Business, Planning Process, four Strategic Directions (Communications, Advocacy, Partnerships and Governance) and Performance Management areas.

In just weeks, not months, a Board approved SBP will be available to you, our members on the AHSCA website. Printed copies will also be available, and watch for a special feature on the plan in an upcoming *Parents' Provincial Perspectives* newsletter. We will be communicating on all initiatives and the positive results; and when objectives are not met, we will explain why.



Stay tuned!

Rick Preston, AHSCA Executive Director

02C-10 APPROPRIATELY SIZED LEARNING GROUPINGS

AHSCA requests that Alberta Learning, in collaboration with education partners set guidelines for what is an appropriate sized group to allow teachers to meet the diverse individual learning needs of students, and provide school boards with sustainable funding for appropriately sized groups.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

Determining the appropriately sized learning group is a complex issue that involves a number of variables. Site-based decision making and current funding allocations provide jurisdictions with the flexibility to allocate staff in ways that best meet the needs of particular communities. School jurisdictions have indicated that they want to continue to make local decisions regarding appropriately sized learning groups.

The Education Commission, a comprehensive review of Alberta's education system, will address issues such as classroom conditions and size. Under the review, an independent committee will seek input from teachers, parents, taxpayers, school boards, and others who have an interest in the education system. AHSCA is encouraged to provide input on appropriately sized groups along with other relevant issues to the Education Commission.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

02C-11 REQUEST FOR OMBUDSMEN

AHSCA requests the creation of positions for at least two ombudsmen; one responsible for handling concerns relating to mainstream education and the other, concerns with special education.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

In Alberta, a number of mechanisms exist currently for addressing parent concerns when they believe their concerns have been treated unfairly. Under section 123 of the School Act, parents may appeal to the school board a decision of an employee that significantly affects the education of a student. Further, parents may request that the Minister review matters, as listed under section 124 of the School Act. In addition, parents may contact Alberta Learning or write to the Minister about their concerns and the Minister may establish an investigation of, or inquiry into, the matter, if warranted (sections 40 and 41).

Through parent consultation sessions in the fall of 2001, it became apparent that many parents are not aware of the local appeal process or that some matters may be reviewed by the Minister.

Standards for Special Education and the revised Partners During Changing Times will include sections on what parents may do when they feel their concerns are not being addressed. As well, Alberta Learning is currently working with the College of School Superintendents (CASS) and the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) to develop an information package and communication plan for informing parents of the procedures already in place to handle concerns relating to mainstream education and the other concerns with special education. As a general rule, matters are best resolved at the level closest to where the decisions are made.

Government is committed to conducting a broad review of the learning system as a whole that are best looked at in consultation with Albertans. Public input will be an important aspect your association may wish to present this idea within the context of the review.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

02C-12 INPUT ON SELECTION OF PRINCIPAL

AHSCA requests an amendment to the School Council Regulation to require school boards to consult with school councils (who wish that level of involvement) to create a profile of preferred qualities of potential new principal(s), and to include a school council parent in the selection process.

ACTION TAKEN

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AHSCA requests an amendment to the School Council Regulation to require school boards to consult with school councils (who wish that level of involvement) to create a profile of preferred qualities of potential new principal(s), and to include a school council parent in the selection process.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

School Council Regulation 171/98 expires on June 30, 2003. Prior to expiry this regulation will be reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be re-passed in its present or an amended form following a review.

The AHSCA as a key stakeholder will be consulted during the review of the School Council Regulation. The AHSCA representative will have the opportunity to recommend that the School Council Regulation be amended to include the requirement that school boards must consult with school councils in the selection of the principal.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002



02C-13 INPUT ON SELECTION: AHSCA requests that the School Council Regulation be amended, to require school boards to consult with school councils (who wish that level of involvement) to build a profile of preferred qualities of potential new staff.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

School Council Regulation 171/98 expires on June 30, 2003. Prior to expiry this regulation will be reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be re-passed in its present or an amended form following a review.

The AHSCA as a key stakeholder will be consulted during the review. The AHSCA representative will have the opportunity to recommend that the School Council Regulation be amended to include the requirement that school boards must consult with school councils in the selection of school staff.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

AHSCA President meeting with Minister, Dec. 2002

02C-14 TEACHER QUALITY MATTERS

AHSCA requests that Alberta Learning work in transparency with education partners to ensure that Teaching Quality Standards are being met consistently, and amend Policy 2.1.5 Accountability in Education, Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation to include evaluation as a consistent and deliberate means to contribute towards teacher growth.

ACTION TAKEN

Policy Submitted to Minister of Learning

RESPONSE

The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy (1998) was developed in consultation with education partners and builds on the Teaching Quality Ministerial Order, the 1996 position paper: An Integrated Framework to Enhance the Quality of Teaching in Alberta, and a 1993 study of Alberta's 1985 teacher evaluation policy. The Policy emphasizes the expectation that school authorities, superintendents, principals and teachers work together to achieve the Teaching Quality Standards. It acknowledges that teachers are committed to being better teachers tomorrow than they are today.

It is important to note the 1993 study concluded that the regular comprehensive evaluation of teachers in many cases represented compliance with a requirement to document the quality of teachers, but did little to improve quality teaching. Therefore, the provincial policy requires principals to engage in ongoing supervision of the quality of teaching in their schools. Where a teacher's teaching may not be in keeping with the Teaching Quality Standards, the policy provides the principal with a range of actions to address such a situation including the formal process of evaluation.

An evaluation may occur at the request of the teacher; for

the purpose of gathering information related to a specific employment decision such as providing a recommendation for permanent certification; or when the principal has reason to believe, on the basis of ongoing supervision, that a teacher's practice does not meet the teaching quality standards. A parent inquiry also may lead to an evaluation, if in the professional judgment of the principal, the inquiry is valid and the evaluation process is the best way to address the necessary modifications to the teacher's practice.

The advantage of performing evaluations as needed or requested, is that direction on required changes to the behaviour or practice of a teacher is more immediate and relevant than when given only at the end-point of an assessment cycle. Prompt attention to making necessary modifications ultimately provides the most benefit to students.

The Association's resolution focuses on transparency. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act) has established standards to ensure a balance between the public's right to access information and an individual's right to have their personal privacy protected. Consequently, the FOIP Act does limit the amount and nature of information that a public body such as a public or separate school board or a charter school may reveal about employment or other remedial actions relating to a teacher. You may want to bring forward your comments within the context of the Education Commission review.

SPECIFIC NEXT STEP

Government response and appropriate action under review by AHSCA Board of Directors

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association

1200, 9925 – 109 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 2J8 Phone 780-454-9867 Toll free at 1-800-661-3470 Fax: 780-455-0167
Email: parents@ahsca.ab.ca or visit our website at www.ahsca.ab.ca

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Any questions or comments, please contact:
Pat Bonazew, Communications

*AHSCA does not promote or endorse any of the products/services advertised in our newsletters.

Diploma Exams Schedule Change

As more and more students enter post-secondary institutions, Alberta Learning will introduce important changes to the humanities diploma examinations this year. These changes will:

- ✓ help students receive their marks earlier
- ✓ help teachers involved in marking return to the classroom more quickly at the start of the new semester
- ✓ streamline processes

The written-response parts of the English 30, English 33, Français 30, French Language Arts 30, Social Studies 30 and Social Studies 33 diploma examinations will be administered approximately one week earlier in January than previously indicated on the published schedule.

As in the past, the Social Studies 33 examination will include four writing assignments. To offer students context for the written-response part of the Social Studies 33 examination, pre-writing activities such as background information and supplementary reading material will be provided. The Social Studies 30 examination will still provide students with a choice of writing assignments, one on Topic A and one on Topic B.

2003

English 30	Part A	Written	January 13
English 33	Part A	Written	January 13
Français 30	Part A	Written	January 14
French L.A. 30	Part A	Written	January 14
Social Studies 30	Part A	Written	January 15
Social Studies 33	Part A	Written	January 15
English 30	Part A	Written	June 9
English 33	Part A	Written	June 9
Français 30	Part A	Written	June 10
French L.A. 30	Part A	Written	June 10
Social Studies 30	Part A	Written	June 11
Social Studies 33	Part A	Written	June 11

If you have questions about these changes, contact Donna Smith, Executive Director, Learning Assessment Branch at (780) 427-0010, toll-free by dialing 310-0000.

Healthy Alternatives in partnership with Canadian Home and School Federation

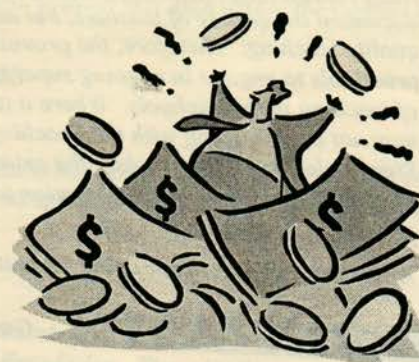
School Volunteer Awards

**\$6,000 cash award presented to the overall
winning school in Canada**

**\$3,000 cash award to one winning school
in each province***

*** Applicants must be members of their provincial
Home and School Councils Association**

Healthy Alternatives, Inc., offers a Health Newsletter and a school fundraising component, which is an option available to all schools whether or not they apply for the award.



More information and application procedures at:
www.healthyalternatives.ca

Registration Deadline: January 31, 2003
Submission Deadline: February 14, 2003