



Meeting Minutes

Central Office Boardroom, Sherwood Park

Oct. 2, 2019

7 p.m.

In Attendance:

Chair: Jacquie Surgenor, Salisbury Composite High & Sherwood Heights Junior High

Secretary: Lesley Bowman, Pine Street Elementary

School Council Members

Ken Allan, A.L. Horton Elementary

Jackie Anderson, Ardrossan Elementary & Ardrossan Junior Senior High

Michelle Beck, Wye Elementary

Alison Blaikie, Bruderheim School

Aaron Box, Strathcona Christian Academy Secondary

April Childs, Lakeland Ridge

Curtis Christopher, École Campbelltown

Nadine Duiker, Salisbury Composite High

Nadine Fricke, James Mowat Elementary & Rudolph Hennig Junior High

Ryan Fukala, Glen Allan Elementary

Ashley Fray, Sherwood Heights Junior High

JP Grebenc, Ardrossan Elementary & Ardrossan Junior Senior High

Jeff Hanrahan, Bev Facey Community High

Ginger Hassett-Koza, Fultonvale Elementary Junior High

Darcy LaRue, Fort Saskatchewan Christian

Courtney Liddle, Win Ferguson Elementary

Devon Marshall, Strathcona Christian Academy Elementary

Robyn Michaelchuk, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary

Holly Pedersen, Fort Saskatchewan Christian

Cheryl Pilipchuk, École Campbelltown

Melissa Presse, Davidson Creek Elementary

Kim Oliver, Wes Hosford Elementary

Sivanthy Suntharalingam, Bev Facey Community High

Jessica Winship, Glen Allan Elementary

Sarah Witholt, Wye Elementary

Board and EIPS

Vice-Chair: Trina Boymook

Trustee: Don Irwin

Trustee: Jim Seutter

Trustee: Harvey Stadnick

Associate Superintendent: Sandra Stoddard

ATA President: Deneen Zielke

Communications: Robert Michon

Welcome

Jacquie Surgenor, the COSC chair, called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m.

COSC Organizational Meeting

a) COSC Elections: 2018-19 – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC member

Surgenor called elections for the positions of chair, vice-chair, and secretary for the 2019-20 school year.

Below are the nominations:

- Chair: Jacquie Surgenor
- Vice-Chair: Krista Scott
- Secretary: Lesley Bowman

Motion: To accept the nominations for the chair, vice-chair and secretary as nominated.

Moved: Jackie Anderson

Seconded: Michelle Beck

Motion Carried

b) COSC Planning – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair-Elect

- Members agreed to:
 - hold COSC meetings on the first Wednesday of the month—early dismissal days; and
 - in February, the meeting will run 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.—to avoid conflicts with a Divisionwide event taking place on the same day;
 - In January and April, the meeting will take place on the second Wednesday of the month because of winter break and spring break.
- Remember to sign in, leave your email and consent to continue receiving COSC information.

Additions to the Agenda

Jacquie Surgenor asked if there were any additions to the Oct. 2, 2019 agenda.

- No amendments were made to the agenda.

Motion: To accept the Oct. 2, 2019 agenda as circulated.

Moved: Aaron Box

Seconded: Kim Oliver

Motion Carried

Approval of the May 1, 2019 Minutes

Jacquie Surgenor asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the May 1, 2019 meeting.

- No changes were made.

Motion: To accept the May 1, 2019 minutes as is.

Moved: Curtis Christopher

Seconded: Ginger Hassett-Koza

Motion Carried

COSC Sharing

a) Blue Ribbon Panel: How can families engage MLAs? — presented by Trina Boymook, Board Chair, and Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- Board Chair Trina Boymook discussed the recently released [*Report and Recommendations: Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta Finances*](#).
- There are two recommendations for K-12 and two of interest to high school families planning for post-secondary.
- *Recommendation 5:* The panel recommends the government work with education stakeholders to decrease the percentage of government funding going to administration and governance—currently 24.6 per cent—to a level comparable to British Columbia—17 per cent.
 - In Alberta, system administration and governance are a term already used. It's capped at 3.6 per cent. The 24.6 per cent referenced in the report includes more than system administration and governance—such as busing, heating and lighting school buildings, school building maintenance and multiple other costs not categorized as instruction but support instruction.

- *Recommendation 6:* The panel recommends the government review and revise its current education funding formula. The review is to ensure enrolment growth is addressed and to provide incentives for sharing services and achieving better student outcomes.
 - The recommendation is concerning because it suggests a portion of the funding be connected to student performance and achievement. Those schools that perform better will receive more than those that struggle. Those that struggle, many times, have a larger vulnerable student population. These are the students who need greater support. Funding on performance will further disadvantage those students.
- *Recommendation 8:* The panel recommends the government work with post-secondary stakeholders to achieve a revenue mix comparable to British Columbia and Ontario—less reliance on government grants, more funding from tuition, alternative revenue sources and a more entrepreneurial approach to how programs are financed and delivered. The recommendation also suggests lifting the current freeze on tuition.
 - Removing the tuition freeze, relying more on tuition and using other alternative revenue could out price post-secondary education as an option for some students.
- *Recommendation 9:* The panel recommends the government assess and address the financial viability of Alberta’s post-secondary institutions.
 - Addressing this recommendation could result in fewer choices available to students, which will drive the cost of tuition up and competition will intensify for the limited seats available.

Questions and Comments

Question: *A lot went on over the summer. We want to discuss what looks different in education now, then it did in May.*

Answer: The [apples-to-oranges](#) document produced by the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) has examples of how the comparison to British Columbia is deceptive. There’s no student transportation in British Columbia like in Alberta. The Alberta number used also includes the amortization of all the buildings. It doesn’t in British Columbia. In addition, the capital isn’t factored into the percentage.

Funding linked to student achievement is a concern. We know schools with lower scores tend to have vulnerable students who, arguably, need more funding to achieve. A model like this moves us closer to the United States model for education. In the world education rankings, the U.S. lands in the mid-30s range. Alberta is in the top five. Funding on achievement isn’t a model to embrace for our students. Also, students who don’t take PATs are given a zero in the compiled results, which affects a school’s results and could have an impact, if funding is tied to results. The government’s planning to use the report for the spring budget. If this doesn’t sit well with you, we encourage you to talk to your local member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to express your concerns.

Universities are also indicating they will increase tuition now the cap is lifted. Meanwhile, non-viable institutions will increase fees if they lose their public funding, which will increase demand and costs for remaining post-secondary institutions.

Q: *Were there only two recommendations for K-12?*

A: Yes, but there was more in the document regarding capital investment. Some recommendations are troubling. Some are worthwhile, and if done right could result in improvements.

ASBA’s meeting of all Board Chairs in Alberta included the Minister of Education and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Education. The government is reviewing funding for K-12 right now. The report is advice she is going to take away. She also needs to find out what was included in the 25 per cent because she knows

there is a system administration cap of 3.6 per cent. The recommendations won't be in the budget we see on October 24. Rather, it will be included in the spring budget.

Q: *What's the Blue Ribbon Panel and who's on it?*

A: Jason Kenney commissioned the panel to understand where the money is being spent if there is a spending problem that needs to be balanced and to provide advice and recommendations to find efficiencies in these systems. The focus is health care and advanced education, with a bit on K-12. When the report was released, the government started with health care, then post-secondary, then K-12. Education spending in Alberta is the second-lowest nationally, to B.C. It states we can still benefit from efficiencies in the administration of the system. Overall, the report doesn't have many criticisms of K-12. That said, education is the second biggest budget line, so one could expect cuts.

Q: *What is the board doing to address these problems? If we want to get this information to parents at our schools, where do we go to get clear and accurate information?*

A: Trustees have a list to cover at their school council meetings. Use the [apples-to-oranges](#) document. Recommendations are in the full government report as well. Superintendent Mark Liguori also has a document coming to the board to understand the meaning behind the information in the report—for example, the amortization of the capital. The Board will also talk with the members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Minister, if possible.

It's important to understand statistics and reports don't tell the whole story. For example, the STEPS and PLACE programs at Westboro. These students don't write exams. As a result, they receive a zero mark on the PATs, which counts on the Accountability Pillar Results and can skew results. The numbers aren't necessarily the whole story. Another example, a friend in Texas spends six weeks to prep for assessment tests because funding is linked to achievement. Tests are a snapshot. So, tying funding to one day isn't necessarily accurate. We need to think about what we want our teachers doing in the classroom. Do they do the fun experiment or prep for tests?

Private schools can be more efficient. But, they can also handpick students, and they reject a student for any reason. It's less expensive to educate the average private school student than it is to educate some students within the public system—to have success and the experience they deserve, it costs more. All these statistics mirror the message from the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) at the provincial level.

Q: *What do you need from parents?*

A: Take a closer look and read the whole [report](#). Some pieces don't necessarily stand out. The context before the recommendations can help you understand the drive for the recommendations. There's a section about alignment, and a division's goals have to align with Alberta Education's business plan—something already in place. The Board has a meeting with the local members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on Nov. 1, 2019. At the meeting, trustees will educate members on what this report means for EIPS students.

Q: *The acceptance at post-secondary seems to be going up to a level that is unachievable for our students. It seems like the system is meant for ex-pats. Additionally, the tuition keeps rising, and it's making it impossible for Alberta students to get into our post-secondary institutions. How are we addressing this?*

A: Read the [KPMG document](#) about the Blue Ribbon Panel. The most important thing we can do is advocate for public education. If we don't let our government know the importance of public education, then we will start to rank lower.

As parents, you have a voice, you have a free range of advocacy and can use your voice. The conversations at the playground and the informal conversations with other parents are how we can communicate this information.

Q: *Is there a form letter or place we can look to get the information to send a letter or email to our MLAs? Is there something we can do to help the parents engage with these issues in an easier way?*

A: There are challenges in sending formatted letters. They tend to get ignored if several of the same letters are received. We need individual challenges and stories. We need them to hear our voices when they are in the room making the decisions. The letters don't have to be long. It's also easy to find the information to contact for your local member of the legislative assembly of Alberta.

Comment: You hired these elected officials. Demand they listen to you.

Board Report – presented by Trina Boymook, Board Chair, EIPS

Board Chair Trina Boymook presented the Board Report. Highlights include:

- On August 29, the Board held its annual organization meeting. Chair Boymook is honoured to serve a Board Chair for a seventh-consecutive term. Trustee Heather Wall is serving as Vice-Chair for a third-consecutive term.
- There are still no details on the provincial budget. At this point, the Board can't make any adjustments to the spring budget. The Board doesn't expect to receive any information about funding until the budget is tabled on Oct. 24, 2019.
 - The Nutrition Program will continue.
 - The Classroom Improvement Fund is not expected to continue.
 - The collective agreement, between the province and teachers, isn't expected to be funded.
 - Student growth isn't expected to be funded.
- On September 9, Chair Boymook hosted a tour of Sherwood Heights with the Minister of Education.
 - A replacement school for Sherwood Heights Junior High is the Board's top priority.
 - The tour was a chance for the Minister to visit the school and see firsthand the importance of the request.
 - The Board hopes a Sherwood Heights Junior High replacement school is part of the capital announcement on October 24.
- On September 9, following the school tour, the Minister met with the Board to discuss:
 - the complexity of providing education in both urban and rural areas;
 - the *Education Act*; and
 - education funding.
- [Policy 24: Personal Communication Devices](#) is now in effect. The Superintendent has also updated [Administrative Procedure 145: Use of Personal Communication Devices](#), which supports Policy 24.
- On September 17-18, trustees took part in the annual Board Retreat. Discussion highlights:
 - School fees.
 - Board priorities
 - advocacy and engagement;
 - education funding;
 - continue to provide excellence in challenging times, which by all indications will become increasingly more difficult; and
 - managing urban student growth in both Fort Saskatchewan and Sherwood Park.
- Unallocated reserves are slightly below \$4 million and can't be lower than that threshold.
 - As such, the Division doesn't have reserves to take on risks. So, the budget approved in the spring is conservative. The Board hopes it was conservative enough.

- Some school boards weren't as conservative as Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) because they had the reserves to back it up. We didn't. So, we went conservative. We are fearful that we weren't conservative enough.
- The media is reporting the province will "maintain funding." However, "maintain" is often a buzzword that can mean different things in different contexts. The Board can't act on something said in the media. Nor has the government defined what maintained means.
- Currently, the Board believes its reserves are higher than originally anticipated. If the Board wasn't conservative enough with its budget, it may need to use those reserves after the provincial budget is announced, on October 24.

Questions and Comments

Question: *Did each Board have to provide assumptive budgets?*

Answer: We did have to send in our best-guess budget at the end of May. Boards are making a guess on how we'll finish at the end of the year—surplus or deficit—and the enrolment for the following year. We send it in, and it can't be a deficit budget. In September, Boards have real numbers from the year-end and actual enrolment numbers. Then, a fall budget is submitted to the province by November 30. Typically, we know the per-student grant in the spring. This year, we didn't. So, we had to make assumptions.

Q: *How do the assumptive budgets impact the provincial allocations?*

A: It doesn't. They go off the budget.

Q: *After a month of school, what are you hearing from the schools in terms of how they are doing so far?*

A: Schools built budgets of 95 per cent going to staffing. Typically, it's 98 per cent. So, in-year funding and higher enrolment numbers are a challenge for schools. Bigger complex classrooms are the reality.

ATA Report — presented by Deneen Zielke, President, Alberta Teachers' Association Local No. 28

Deneen Zielke presented the ATA Report. Highlights include:

- On August 12-16, Zielke attended the ATA Summer Conference with executive members from locals around the province. The conference focused on recent education-related initiatives announced by the province. Specifically, the ATA is concerned about the province's decision to remove teacher input from the new curriculum panel, Bill 9: Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act and Bill 8: The Education Amendment Act. In response to Bill 9, the ATA has filed a legal challenge and is preparing for the upcoming arbitration. Meanwhile, Bill 8 poses many repercussions for the public school system, particularly the new rules on how Gay-Straight Alliances are established and operated in schools. Teachers feel strongly students should feel safe and not have to worry about being outed and potential repercussions when they join a GSA.
- The summer was also busier than normal, keeping members informed. The Local is also encouraging members to lobby the government regarding these issues.
- When the Education Minister stated the ATA is looking out for teachers and not students, it became apparent, to the Local, voices alone will not influence change and classrooms will continue to face cuts. Through no fault of the Board or administrators, students feel the impact with larger classrooms and less money to support inclusion. It's extremely important parents speak up and demand sustained and adequate funding to address these issues.

- On August 28, Zielke attended the EIPS Off to a Good Start orientation session. At the event, she brought greetings on behalf of the Local, met with new teachers within the Division, encouraged attendees to visit the Local's website and explained how to access its online professional learning account.
- On September 26, the ATA hosted the 2019 Beginning Teachers Conference. It was nice to meet with the eager new teachers.

For Information

a) Parent-Teen Study — presented by Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent

- The Division has approved participation in a University of Alberta [Parent-Teen Study](#), which looks at parents, teens and their daily experiences.
- Researchers are looking for teens between 12 and 17 years old.
- Teens and one of their parents take five minutes a day to answer a series of questions.
- Researchers are studying the link between parents and teens in terms of and socio-emotional development and wellness.

b) ASCA Update: Funding, membership, engagement – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- The Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) is the provincial voice of parents through school councils. It's one of the five provincial education partners:
 - Alberta School Councils' Association
 - Alberta School Boards Association
 - Alberta Teachers' Association
 - Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
 - College of Alberta School Superintendents
- ASCA sits on major committees and provides input into education initiatives and ideas—to both Alberta Education and its partners.
- ASCA is funded in three ways:
 - membership fees—EIPS buys memberships for each school council, which funds ASCA's Board of Directors to do advocacy on behalf of members.
 - Alberta Education grant—It funds the membership services ASCA does to support school councils such as staff to answer questions and co-ordinate professional learning sessions for school councils.
 - miscellaneous—a small portion for services, such as information sessions for fundraising societies, conference fees or the resource gallery.
- A few years ago, the grant changed from a three-year grant to a one-year grant. The grant ran out on June 30, 2019. As of yet, ASCA hasn't received word whether a new grant will be successful. As such, ASCA has to stop providing sessions and services after October.
- ASCA encourages school councils to contact their members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and the Minister of Education to share stories about how ASCA is helpful.

c) Online COSC Information: Facebook and *eips.ca* – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- School Council members can join the [COSC Facebook page](#).
- There is also a web page for [school councils](#) on *eips.ca*—under “Parents” there's a COSC tab with all the information from the meetings, minutes, agendas and attachments.

d) Student-to-Author Conference – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- Information about the [Student-to-Author Conference](#) is available at eips.ca.
- The conference is geared toward junior high students.
- Spread the word.

e) Caregiver Series – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- The Division, in partnership with Alberta Health Services and Elk Island Catholic Schools, is hosting a series of [caregiver information sessions](#) focused on ways to support students' mental health.
- The sessions are free and geared toward parents, caregivers, teachers and community members who want to learn more about challenges impacting children and adolescents.
- This year, session topics include anxiety, ADHD, depression, self-harm, technology, teens and teaching leadership skills, and more.

f) PEP Talk – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- The October issue of [PEP Talk](#) is now available.
- We've had great feedback from anyone who attended the Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) sessions.
- You can also use last year's *Saffron Cyber Second* articles.
- Add the link to pages on your school website.
- We will try to have a *PEP Talk* every month.

New Business

a) Choice in Education Act – presented by Trina Boymook, Chair, EIPS

- The Education Minister will bring forward the *Choice in Education Act* in the Spring—not in the fall.
- What Choice in Education means is not clear. It will be clearer in the future.
- The school council at Pine Street Elementary discussed the [ASCA Parental Engagement Task Force question](#).
 - The school council discussed private schools, their ability to hand-pick students and receive 75 per cent of funding.
 - Charter schools and home school can get 100 per cent funding
- EIPS has Christian programs, LOGOS programs and busing to accommodate non-designated schools.
- Another school council had a conversation about what choice in education means to them.
- COSC members shared what it meant to them:
 - I get to choose where my kids get their education.
 - Parents with children with special needs have to find the best fit for their child.
 - Public school provides what they can. It's not necessarily what he needs.
 - Great to hear about the many choices we have in our public system, what choice means is access—being able to choose without having to pay or stand in some huge line-up. It's public school that we all have access to.
 - Choice to us, means choices within the classroom and supporting teachers who provide choices for our children in the classroom.
 - The parent is the child's primary educator and the system is the tool used to educate them in this particular circumstance.
 - Choice means the option to do what is best for your child, home, public, private or charter.

- There are choices available, but there are still limitations and the choices are not available to all people. In terms of socio-economic situations, there will always be folks who are excluded from the opportunity to engage in those systems.
- There are certain situations where there is no choice—it doesn't always work.
- There are some options for kids to find success instead of the struggle.

Questions and Comments

Question: *Is blended programming an option before high school or is it just a request?*

Answer: If you're looking for alternative programming, we can facilitate that. There is complexity around choice. EIPS welcomes alternative programs. It also has inclusive settings and system programs. One of the challenges is accommodating all the needs and requests from parents.

b) *Education Act* – presented by Trina Boymook, Chair, EIPS

- The [*Education Act*](#) came into effect on Sept. 1, 2019.
- At the May 1 COSC meeting, Superintendent Liguori presented on the differences between the *School Act* and *Education Act* and the anticipated changes.
- Bill 8 includes positive amendments to the *Education Act*:
 - Age of access – retaining provisions in the *School Act* where students can access education up to age 19. The *Education Act* previously had the age set at 21.
 - Residency – retaining provision in the *School Act* that state residency is based on where the parent resides. The *Education Act* previously had proposed the student's address for residency.
 - Regulation amendments – Boards are no longer required to report to the Minister of Education and seek ministerial approval before charging school fees and transportation fees. The change will significantly reduce the administrative burden at both the school level and central level.
 - Policy work – The Board is assessing what it will retain under its authority and what ones it will delegate to the Superintendent. The work will take place over the coming year.
- Discussion highlights:
 - School Fees
 - The previous government created an administrative burden when the Minister of Education had to approve fees. Schools missed out on opportunities because of the extra administration.
 - Schools must put together a school-fee schedule, which the Board approves.
 - Conversations with families must occur before fees are sent to the Board.
 - The Board wants flexibility for the unexpected and mindfulness about the additional financial burden of fees.
 - The Board's reviewing a process for reviewing and approving fee schedules. Once final, it will discuss at a COSC meeting.
 - Transportation Fees
 - The Minister of Education doesn't have to approve.
 - The five per cent increase limit is gone.
 - EIPS only receives funding for students who live more than 2.4-kilometres away from their designated school and are attending their designated school.
 - The Board's mandate is to provide transportation as stated in the funding description.

- EIPS provides enhanced services. For example, if it cost \$850 per student to transport them for the whole school year, and doesn't receive funding, EIPS can charge up to the cost to transport that student.
- The Division can't profit from the fee.
- If the student falls under the mandate, and there is a funding shortfall, EIPS can charge the family the shortfall.
- The fee is to recoup the actual cost of transporting the students, not to make a profit.
- Currently, the Board is gaining details and direction from the Minister. Once complete, EIPS will review its policies and administrative procedures. The review process will likely take a year.

Questions and Comments

Question: *At what point will parents know if they will have to pay for transportation?*

Answer: Everything is in place for this school year. Families received fees already. There are no adjustments.

Q: *For dual residency, how does the Division determine transportation?*

A: One address is the primary address. There is a charge for additional addresses. The Board will continue the conversation throughout the year. A lot has happened since May. So, it seems like a lot.

Q: *Under the old Bill 1 about school fees, there was a process for if there was extra left in the school fees? Is that still in the regulation?*

A: Yes. Additional money collected has to be accounted for. Financial Services is reconciling those accounts.

Q: *Is there any update about the panel on the education delivery or the new curriculum implementation?*

A: It's on pause for a short period. Next year is the field testing. And, the next year is the implementation. So, essentially, a one-year delay. The Board isn't slowing down its plans for EIPS. The new panel will develop strategies for future curriculum. It's not reviewing it.

Q: *Why the drop of the word "public"?*

A: We knew the *Education Act* would drop the "Regional Division No. 14." There were no discussions about dropping "public" for public school boards. We still don't have an answer to why school boards need to lose public. Eight of the 61 divisions must remove "public." Some Roman Catholic divisions can retain the "Roman." If the rationale is consistency, it doesn't make sense. The Division may request the corporate name be Elk Island Public School. The Division can also continue to brand itself as EIPS. All land contracts and banking must shift to the new name. The Board looks forward to a response from the Minister about retaining the name.

Comment: When the government released the school-fee freeze, it evened out our field trip fees and so it was great for some schools. We're working toward a process to ensure the fee conversation happens at school council meetings before they are set.

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

The next COSC meeting:

Date: Wednesday, Nov. 6, 2019

Time: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Location: Boardroom, EIPS Central Services Office, in Sherwood Park