



Committee of School Councils

Meeting Minutes

Central Office Boardroom, Sherwood Park

March 4, 2020

7 p.m.

In Attendance:

Chair: Jacquie Surgenor, Salisbury Composite High, Sherwood Heights Junior High & Westboro Elementary
Vice-Chair: Krista Scott, Fultonvale Elementary Junior High & Strathcona Christian Academy Secondary
Secretary: Lesley Bowman, Pine Street Elementary

Cheryl Pilipchuk, École Campbelltown
Melissa Pressé, Davidson Creek Elementary
Brian Vick, Brentwood Elementary
Sarah Witholt, Wye Elementary

School Council Members

Jackie Anderson, Ardrossan Elementary & Ardrossan Junior Senior High
Aaron Box, Strathcona Christian Academy Secondary
JP Grebenc, Ardrossan Elementary & Ardrossan Junior Senior High
Jeff Hanrahan, Bev Facey Community High
Ginger Hassett-Koza, Fultonvale Elementary Junior High
Robyn Michaelchuk, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary

Board and EIPS

Vice-Chair: Heather Wall
Trustee: Annette Hubick
Trustee: Jim Seutter

Associate Superintendent: Brent Billey
Associate Superintendent: Sandra Stoddard
ATA President: Deneen Zielke
Communications: Corrie Fletcher

Welcome

Jacquie Surgenor, the COSC chair, called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Additions to the Agenda

Jacquie Surgenor asked if there were any additions to the March 4, 2020 agenda.

- No amendments were made to the agenda.

Motion: To accept the March 4, 2020 agenda as circulated.

Moved: Ginger Hassett-Koza

Seconded: Sarah Witholt

Motion Carried

Approval of the Feb. 5, 2020 Minutes

Jacquie Surgenor asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the Feb. 5, 2020 meeting.

- No changes were made.

Motion: To accept Feb. 5, 2020 minutes as is.

Moved: Jackie Anderson

Seconded: Sarah Witholt

Motion Carried

COSC Sharing

a) ASCA Advocacy Resolutions – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, Chair, COSC

- If there are individuals interested in running for director, there is still time to put in their nomination.
- There are videos on the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) website that shows what the annual general meeting process looks like. You can watch and share this information with your school councils.
- ASCA advocates for the intent of the advocacy, not the precise language of the advocacy resolution.

Proposed Advocacy Resolution 20-05

- The resolution would rescind 18-3C because we have made a point of rescinding our redundant policies.
- This is important, as complexities are as critical as class size.
- The more children you have in a class means that if there is a child whose needs aren't being met it impacts the other learners in the classroom. If there is a large number of students in the class, those students don't have their needs met and the teachers do not have the time to help all the students. This impacts your student, even if they are not higher needs.
- I agree with inclusive education, but wonder if this is an education issue when it should be a social issue. I have a challenge with the component of our education budget. There should be a social budget within an education budget.
- It comes down to the idea of student-centred education. It is challenging to meet "whole student needs" in the current budget framework, but separating higher needs students will not necessarily work. The challenges of delivering differentiated education become clearer the older students get. Differentiated education is not well understood or delivered at the high school level. Going back to the way it was—separating higher need students—is not necessarily the way to go.
- Agreed, we do not need to separate, but what I have seen, based on how they are managing, there is an added draw on resources, there has not been a transfer of money from social to education.
- I am not sure what you are talking about specifically—children without special needs or kids who are disruptive—however, it has been shown that it is better to have a child with special needs in the classroom, if it can be done. All children have a right to education; just because she isn't going to "use" the education as much as a "normal" child does not mean she shouldn't receive it. Frequently, less homogenous kids are kept within their classrooms, whereas the kids with extreme disabilities tend to segregate more.
- I see both sides of the argument, whether inclusion moves forward or not. However, this has been debated in the courts. Inclusive education is a right. Section 32, "rights of parents" addresses inclusive education on both sides of the argument—there is nothing we can do because of the *Education Act*.
 - Confusing—can we not move our child if we feel the classroom is disruptive?
 - This has not gone to court—if the parent of the disruptive child does not want to move their child—there is no way to remove that child.
 - We would like cross-ministerial support to pool resources to provide more funding to education—taking public dollars from public education to private and charter school—takes money away from adequately funding an inclusive system.
 - New curriculum—for high school there is a watered-down curriculum that does not work well. The new government is not funding based on valuing inclusive education—they would not ever say that.
 - Last year, there was a resolution on publicly elected school boards.

Proposed Advocacy Resolution 20-02

- Weighting diploma exams—we thought once diploma weighting changed, we would not have to address it again. This was one of the items that ASCA discussed and polled on during the mid-year online Member Engagement. The results indicated it is important to members.
 - Should we amend the language to indicate the 2010-11 weighting needs to be changed?
 - COSC attendees agreed, 50 per cent is too much and 30 per cent seems reasonable for a final exam.
 - Feedback from a school council meeting: a group of professors attending mentioned they only look at the final exam mark, whether it is 50 per cent or 30 per cent, rather than the bulk of the course material.
 - Students are accepted on blended marks or marks halfway through Grade 12. Many provinces do not even write diplomas.
 - We do not want the teachers to have to teach to the test.
 - How does the new curriculum inform this? We do not want our education system to be like the United States model that values performance and perhaps links funding to performance.
 - We provided feedback that rote learning is not what our kids need to be successful in the future. There are signals in the language from the government they want to go there. That is why advocacy is so important at this time. The stop and start on the curriculum on this is challenging. The new curriculum does not fit to the old school way of teaching. When the provincial achievement tests and diploma exams are disconnected from curriculum, students will not be where they should.

Board Report – presented by Heather Wall, Board Vice-Chair, EIPS

Board Vice-Chair Heather Wall presented the Board Report. Highlights include:

- The budget information is not very comprehensive at this point.
- We will not get our full budget envelope until April 15, 2020 or later.
 - There was a meeting after the budget where the government said you couldn't compare what it looked like last year versus this year.
 - The date legislated budgets are due for boards and schools is May 2020, that's not changing.
 - Those of you in Sherwood Park, the community engagement will not happen now because we are not in as bad of shape as we thought. Not sure what we are doing in Fort Saskatchewan. Right now, everything is on hold. We haven't finalized the capital plan, so we do not want to send out inaccurate information.

Comments and Questions:

Question: Can they not just give you a number?

Answer: No, they aren't giving out the full number. It's one piece at a time. So, there's no comprehensive number. There is a new Deputy Minister, Andre Corbould, who has been with the government for a while and asked for Education. There are reports he's an honourable man and a reasonable individual, which is a pretty nice thing for education. So, we give him the benefit of the doubt until he proves otherwise.

Comment: On behalf of parents, we understand you are in a tough spot. We understand the Board is frustrated, and everybody needs information. We are speaking on behalf of parents—we want you to know that when we write a letter about student transportation—it is frustrating when there is no answer. When we hear at our school council tables people wonder if they can send their kids to school next year. Again, it is

frustrating when there is no answer. Parents need to know if there are options. It's serious for parents in EIPS.

A: We do not know until we see the news. The Board knew that they wanted to change the fee structure, and they wanted to reduce the fees for most people. They did what they could with the information they had without moving the re-registration date.

Q: How do parents who do not attend COSC get information in a timely and effective manner?

A: It should not be from the people in this room and our job to move this forward to parents.

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

Deneen Zielke presented the ATA Report. Highlights include:

- Zielke thanked trustees Don Irwin and Harvey Stadnick, Surgenor and Leslie Bowman, the COSC secretary, for attending the Partners in Education luncheon on February 7. The highlight: keynote speaker Candy Palmater, a Canadian comedian and broadcaster, who discussed the importance of public education.
- The ATA obtained documents from a request under the *Freedom of Information and Protection and Privacy Act*. The documents show, despite government assurances of a funding freeze, school boards received \$136 million less in 2019-20 than in the 2018-19 school year. The decrease amounts to a four per cent cut in per-pupil funding. Overall, the Local is disheartened and hopes more public pressure will convince the government to fund education in the upcoming years adequately.
- On February 27, Zielke and many EIPS teachers attended the March for What Matters at the Alberta legislature. Approximately 14,000 people took part in the rally, which is impressive.
- On March 6-7, Local executive members are attending a seminar on political engagement. The Local's also invited Aaron Box, an EIPS COSC member, to attend and learn from the seminar.
- On March 13, the Local is hosting a Beers and Budget event for teachers. The Local will review the recent provincial budget and its implications for public education. The Local has also invited Sarah Hoffman, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the NDP Critic for Education, the regional members of the legislative assembly of Alberta, and various COSC members.

For Information

a) ASCA Update — presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- Videos are on the ASCA site so see them and share them.
- Content is good, we don't want to change them immediately.

b) ASCA Conference and AGM — presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- Still the third weekend in April.
- Board will sponsor 12 school councils.
- The first member is free, but secondary members have to pay a nominal fee.
- Corrie Fletcher will send information on how to register.

c) Proxy Vote – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- If you can't go, we recommend you fill out a [proxy form](#).
- [Proxy forms](#) should be in by noon on April 20, 2020.
- We will send a list of attending members so you know who will accept a proxy vote.

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

- The March issue of [PEP Talk](#) is now available.
- PEP is a support group for parents with children who are dealing with addictions
- Included in your meeting package: 4Cs of Family Recovery

New Business

a) COSC Operating Procedure – presented by Jacquie Surgenor, COSC Chair

- COSC members in attendance reviewed the operating procedures presented by Surgenor and Krista Scott, the COSC Vice-Chair.
- Members debated points on dissolution and conflict resolution.
- Surgenor, Scott, and Bowman will meet to review and finish the document for presentation and debate at the April COSC meeting.

b) Alberta's Funding Framework: What we know so far – presented by Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent, EIPS

A new funding and assurance model for the education system starts in the 2020-21 school year.

- Three-year funding commitment to education and allocating funds in a predictable manner.
- Less red tape, reporting and administration.
- Containing the cost of growth during fiscal restraint
- Assuring the long-term viability of rural schools.
 - Bill 5 means we will have to ask for permission to use our reserves. In two years they will tell what we can and cannot access. Essentially, the government is now in control of reserves.
 - That money is used as a part of their bottom line. The government wants to show it's reducing the deficit. As we look at numbers, there will be another budget shortfall. In the media it says we all received more funding—some of the surpluses included money schools already had. Our Urban Collaborative Service Delivery money has been taken and added in. We no longer have reserves that we have access to. Until we look at the funding envelopes all together, we do not know anything more than there will be a shortfall. We are having discussions based on the limited information we have. Looking at systemic change to keep the money in the classroom. The priority of senior leadership and the Board is to keep money in the classroom. Let us focus on what we can control, let us use the money.
 - Leadership and school councils have a look at the nice to haves versus the need to haves.
 - The new model—previously boards had a per-pupil model. It's now shifted to a weighted moving average.
 - 2018-19: 20 per cent actual
 - 2019-20: 30 per cent estimates
 - 2020-21: 50 per cent projection

- If you overestimate, they take the money back the next year through the rolling average. You will pay the next school year.
- We go from 36 to 15 buckets of funding.
- In the past, we had targeted grants. Now, grants aren't targeted. They are flexible and you can allocate where you need. But there are shortfalls. You could take buckets and re-allocate, but that is a concern. We are trying to keep them as close to their intent as possible for the first year.
- Kindergarten funding on the weighted average of .5 of what a full-time student would get.
- Grades 1-9 have a different full-time grant.
- Grade 12 -No more CEUs or the Carnegie Unit. It's 10 per cent more than the grade 1-9 funding.
- For rural schools, the province will allocate a rate to what they believe a school can operate on a sliding scale. But, a blocked fund will go to those schools.
- Inclusive learning grant—\$12.7 million in funding. PUF changes to \$1.7 million from \$5.5 million.
- Small amount for ESL.
- Small amount for refugees.
- First Nation, Métis and Inuit is funded in three buckets: per pupil on self-identified, allocation based on truth and reconciliation outcomes, and youth in care.
- School
 1. Operation and Maintenance—this funding is targeted and cannot move.
 - a. We don't know that funding yet.
 2. Transportation—held harmless from 2019-21
- Community
 1. Based on socioeconomic status—very mixed but not an adequate representation.
 2. Geographic—long distance to travel
 3. Nutrition
- System and Administration
 1. Targeted and cannot move money into this. If there is an overage, they will claw it back 3.2 per cent.
- Assurance Model
 - Built on the strengths and best practices of the Accountability Pillar and Assurance Pilot.
 1. student growth and achievement
 2. teaching and leading
 3. learning supports
 4. governance
 5. attending to local and societal context.
 - Not being asked to submit a new plan now. They want the education plan and assurance model to be submitted with budgeting—a year to determine. Stoddard has worked on these focus groups in the past with Edmonton Public Schools. EIPS is lucky to have her background.
 - There is a metric of engaging stakeholders.

Comments and Questions

Question: It was about two years ago we attended a focus group on the Assurance Model. They spoke of this and we have anticipated it. I spoke to a parent in a Division with an assurance model and she quite likes it. How does a person in the public know that the province is following this model?

Answer: Principals are setting an expectation that they will ask parents to help fix this and fundraise.

This has not been a direction from administration or the Board. We do not want the shortfall to come on the backs of parents. We speak of nice to have versus need to have. This is a natural direction to go when we talk about reduction in services.

We need support from councils to have these discussions with caregivers—less service delivery, more stress for teachers. We need them focused on teaching and learning. We no longer can be all things to all kids. Educators want to do all these extras, but we do need to recognize that it will look different.

Comment: This is an opportunity for school councils. There are ways to support education without buying things. We have created school education plans and how can parents support this? Parents helping with coaching, Wee Read, literacy, numeracy. It doesn't have to meet funding. We will not pay for anything that Alberta Education should pay for. That is a philosophy for some school councils. If we rescue the government, we will get less and less. More conversations about what we can do and how we can support.

C: I am proud of this Division and have never seen such a concerted effort to protect the classroom and direct dollars to the front line. Have confidence in that piece. Will we get it right the first year? Maybe not, but we are surely doing our best.

Q: Has there been more discussion on funding based on performance?

A: There has been conversation around this. It will impact our funding. We need the strategic plan and continue to adjust our priorities based on the most impact.

Q: Will this happen this year?

A: Not this year for public education, but yes for post-secondary education. Base grants plus performance. Not pretending to know something we don't but they have already done it for advanced education. The government has a strong agenda and they will carry it out no matter what. People need to understand that the Board will do what it can. The government has handed us the money and what we choose to do with it is what we can do. It's putting the decision-making in our hands. Minister Toews says it does not erode autonomy, but it does.

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

The next COSC meeting:

Date: Wednesday, April 8, 2020

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

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