



MEETING MINUTES

Elk Island Public Schools, in-person meeting
Jan. 4, 2023 | 7 p.m.

In Attendance

SCHOOL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

Chair: Lesley Williams, Sherwood Heights Junior High

Vice-Chair: Chelsea Pretzlaw, Ardrossan Elementary

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Aileen Bozic, SCA Secondary (Interim Secretary)

April Childs, Lakeland Ridge

Brian Vick, Brentwood Elementary

Jennie March, Ardrossan Junior Senior High

Jennifer Dechaine, École Parc Élémentaire

Jennifer Fukuyama, Clover Bar Junior High

Kendra Roemer, Mills Haven Elementary

Kerry Churchill, Fort Saskatchewan Christian

Lisa Harke, SCA Elementary

Nadine Fricke, James Mowat Elementary

Nana Thaver, Woodbridge Farms Elementary

Sarah Witholt, Heritage Hills Elementary

Tasha Baker, Next Step Sherwood Park

Tawnia McQueen, Wes Hosford Elementary

ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Trina Boymook, Chair

Colleen Holowaychuk, Vice-Chair

Cathy Allen, Trustee

Don Irwin, Trustee

Jim Seutter, Trustee

ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mark Liguori, Superintendent

Sandra Stoddard, Associate Superintendent

Marcus Reed, Director of Specialized Supports

Mardi Hardt, Mental Health Advisor

Deneen Zielke, ATA Local No. 28 President

Emma Small, Communication Services

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

AGENDA

COSC Chair Williams called for additions or deletions to the agenda.

MOTION | The agenda be adopted, as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COSC Chair Williams called for approval of the Nov. 2, 2022, meeting minutes.

MOTION | The minutes be approved, as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

Board Report

Board Chair Trina Boymook presented the Board Report.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- At the November 17 Board meeting, the Board of Trustees heard a summary of the feedback received through various public engagement sessions on cleaning up junior high attendance boundaries in Sherwood Park. Board Chair Boymook stated no recommendation or decision will be made about junior high attendance areas until spring 2023. She explained senior administration needs more time to complete two other public engagements before EIPS Superintendent Mark Liguori will determine his recommendation to the Board. Given that the recommendation is now projected to come after the 2023-24 registration, there'll be no changes to the junior high boundaries for the 2023-24 school year.
- The Board has approved a two-year random selection process pilot for James Mowat Elementary and an alternative designated school for the James Mowat attendance area. Current students enrolled within the school will be grandfathered.
- On November 29 and 30, the Board held a retreat to develop their workplan, identify advocacy priorities and finalize their Board evaluation. Board Chair Boymook stated that moving forward, special attention will be given to monitoring progress of the Division's COVID-19 recovery plan, completing 2022-23 public engagements and preparing for the upcoming provincial election. Advocacy efforts will focus on curriculum, infrastructure needs, mental health and funding.
- At the December 15 Board meeting, a summary of the Logos public engagements was presented for the Board's information. The Board expects to receive a recommendation at the Board meeting on March 16.
- The next public engagement session for French Immersion is tentatively scheduled for February 7.
- EIPS' Mental Health Pilot proposal was approved, and the Division will receive \$1.94 million over the next two years. Board Chair Boymook stated the proposal focuses especially on junior highs.
- The Board is currently making arrangements to meet with Bruderheim and Lamont Town Council, in addition to the Fort Saskatchewan City Council.
- Board Chair Boymook and Fort Saskatchewan Trustees made a request to meet with Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, member of the legislative assembly of Alberta for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, to discuss Fort Saskatchewan capital needs.
- The Board received news that Sherwood Heights will proceed through a design build and not a public-private partnership (P3). The remaining design work will continue under Alberta Infrastructure. The Board remains hopeful that EIPS will manage the construction phase.
- The Education Minister approved the Board's request to access more of the Division's operating reserves to cover some of the costs to address the storm water drainage issue at Salisbury Composite High. The funds have been transferred into the Division's capital reserves.
- With the announcement of EIPS Superintendent Liguori's retirement, the Board has initiated its Superintendent recruitment process.
- The returning student registration process opens February 1. There are five schools with closed boundaries for the 2023-24 school year: Ardrossan Elementary, Ardrossan Junior Senior High, Davidson Creek Elementary, James Mowat Elementary and SouthPointe School. All returning students must complete a Returning Student Registration Form before the process closes February 28.

ATA Report

ATA Local No. 28 President Deneen Zielke presented the ATA report.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Zielke stated it was nice to attend an in-person Christmas concert this year, because students and their families were so excited, and it was a great way to get into the Christmas spirit.
- The [Stand for Education](#) campaign has moved into Phase Two. Stand for Education is the provincial ATA's three-phase engagement campaign to encourage Albertans to speak up for a strong public education system. Phase Two consists of public roundtable discussions to set a bold, hopeful vision for the province's public education. The ATA has hosted well-attended round table discussions in Edmonton and Calgary, and they're planning two more, one in north Alberta and one in south Alberta.
- Several local associations are also hosting roundtable data collection events to include in the final report from the provincial ATA. Zielke stated that Elk Island Local ATA No. 28 would be hosting such an event from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Bev Facey Community High library on January 18. The actual task would take one hour from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. with time to socialize afterward.

For Information

ASCA UPDATE – Lesley Williams, COSC Chair

- For Phase Two of the Stand for Education campaign, COSC Chair Williams stated ASCA is asking school councils to include a [short, facilitated discussion](#) (15-20 minutes) at an upcoming school council meeting to gather parent/guardian input and generate a hopeful vision for public education in advance of the 2023 provincial election. The deadline to provide input would be February 3.
- To influence change in education, school councils in Alberta can [identify issues](#) in provincial education affecting ECS to Grade 12 students they would like addressed, changed or resolved. COSC Chair Williams stated school councils can submit a [Proposed Advocacy Resolution Form](#) to ASCA for the discussion and consideration of members attending ASCA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 23. The deadline to submit advocacy resolutions would be January 27.
- COSC Chair Williams explained that each year is an opportunity for parents on ASCA member school councils to expand their knowledge of Alberta's education system, and their education advocacy efforts, to a provincial level, by running for a position on the [Board of Directors](#). Several positions are available. Election of the Board of Directors takes place at the AGM on April 23.

CAREGIVER SERIES UPDATE – Lesley Williams, COSC Chair

- The [January Caregiver Series](#) schedule is now available.
- Offered through Alberta Health Services, the sessions are informative and valuable.
- COSC Chair Williams encouraged members to review the [January Caregiver Series](#) calendar.

SCHOOL COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT GRANT – Lesley Williams, COSC Chair and Kendra Roemer, COSC member

- COSC Chair Williams confirmed the \$500 provincial School Council Engagement (SCE) Grant will be available again this year for each school council.
- There was an excellent response to the SCE Grant survey sent to school councils about pooling funds.
- The areas with the most interest for pooling funds: how to build positive partnerships, how to be an effective school council, and building parent engagement. Many of these topics are ASCA workshops. COSC member Kendra Roemer stated she'd investigate the possibility of a mini conference with ASCA and how much the event would cost.
- Other speaker opportunities could include David Irvine's Raising Accountable Humans or Debbie Pushor's Compassionate Caregivers.
- All plans depend on the number of schools who choose to pool their money together.

- COSC Chair Williams asked that school councils don't leave their grant money unused this year. If they believe they won't use the grant, they should consider pooling it with other councils, so it doesn't get wasted.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Question: Based on the feedback from the survey, what is the audience we're hoping to have for the event where schools have pooled funds? Is it more for school council members specifically or for parent engagement?

Answer: Both, each council will have different needs. There are many new school council chairs present that will see where the funds would be best spent.

Question: ASCA generally charges \$200-300 per session for each school council. Do we know what the charge would be for a group of school councils?

Answer: COSC will need to reach out to ASCA to see how much it would be.

Question: Based on the survey feedback, if there's only a handful of schools who pool their funds together, will the funds be used on sessions specifically for school councils and not for parents?

Answer: Not necessarily, it will depend on the funds collected.

Comment: I can see a lot of schools not wanting to participate if the pooling funds opportunity is council-based only.

Response: It does need to have a broad appeal to get people involved and interested.

Question: As a school council, can the funds be used towards a website development to help increase parental communication?

Answer: Yes.

New Business

ANNUAL EDUCATION RESULTS REPORT 2021-22 – Associate Superintendent Sandra Stoddard

- Associate Superintendent Stoddard stated the purpose of EIPS' *Annual Education Results Report* (AERR) is to demonstrate what the Division is doing with its plan and priorities, in addition to gaining the confidence of stakeholders. The AERR also highlights key priority strategies, detailing areas where the Division is doing well and areas that need improvement.
- The beginning of the AERR discusses accountability, the EIPS assurance cycle, and the challenges the Division faced in the past year, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Division has many surveys, which are incredibly valuable in gathering feedback from various stakeholders. EIPS looks at both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered.
- The Division also has many engagement opportunities, which give EIPS a chance to share rationale and receive input to share with the Board.
- Associate Superintendent Stoddard then went through a brief of overview of each goal in the Division's three priorities found in the AERR, based on the ones found in the *Four-Year Education Plan: 2018-22*.
- Information can be found about the budget and three-year capital plan in the AERR.

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN: ATTENDANCE INITIATIVE – Marcus Reed, Director of Specialized Supports and Mardi Hardt, Mental Health Advisor

- EIPS' Mental Health Strategic Plan spans multiple years. Reed stated that the Division is very excited about what has happened so far.
- Reed then discussed the Attendance Initiative in the mental health plan. Broadly, attendance is critical to student success. Reed stated the following:
 - The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the problem of poor attendance.
 - There are many myths and misconceptions about attendance.

- Attendance is associated with various mental health disorders. There's a bidirectional link between diagnosable mental health disorders and attendance—students can be affected both ways. For example, a student who skips class may experience more depression or a student with depression may skip more class.
- The Division continues to work on intervention for poor attendance and has seen a lot of positive action within schools.
- Reed discussed the Division's three-tier intervention support system:
 - Bottom: Includes universal strategies, such as creating an engaging culture.
 - Middle: Referral to a Family School Liaison Worker (FSLW). EIPS has seen 82 referrals this year. In the Division, there are three FSLWs whose focus is on attendance completely.
 - Top: Includes community conferencing—EIPS has trained 15 practitioners and uses restorative approaches. If this intervention fails, it then goes to a provincial attendance board to resolve the issue.
- Attendance intervention is a collaborative effort, involving relationship-building, engagement and connection with students. Intervention is always tailored to the situation.
- COSC members can share attendance myths with their school council.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Question: How do the absentee numbers we've heard today compare to four years ago pre-pandemic?

Answer: Absences have tripled since the start of the pandemic.

Question: There are many factors (such as poverty, racism and bullying) that impact why students are absent—what is happening to prevent these absences?

Answer: It is different for each family. Understanding their needs helps EIPS determine what supports they may need. Reed stated the Division wants to be sure that the supports it provides are beneficial to each family. The Board heard last year at the assurance reviews that the schools had trouble with student attendance. Attendance is a piece of the larger mental health plan because absenteeism can carry over into mental health.

Question: Is there any correlation to other cultural events that the Division calendar doesn't include?

Answer: The Division investigates each case individually to see if there is another reason for the absenteeism so it can ascertain if intervention isn't needed.

Question: With the data we're collecting, do we see if attendance is a multi-ministerial concern? Are we looking to other ministries for support, so this is not only on an under-funded Alberta Education?

Answer: EIPS is exploring partnerships at local levels, such as Family and Community Support Services via FSLWs. The Division is getting information to parents and addressing myths, working on prevention at a school level.

The Division is also sharing the data it collects with appropriate levels of government and the Board is advocating with municipalities, communities and city councils. The Board will meet with local MLAs to share what resources are needed in communities.

Question: How can parents and school councils help?

Answer: Write your MLA to advocate for needed supports (cc'ing the minister and opposition). Do not underestimate your personal connections and how simple conversations can help create supports.

Question: Should we gear our grant money towards mental health?

Answer: There could be a potential to do so.

Question: Is it the school's responsibility to reach out to families or the families' responsibility to reach out to the school?

Answer: It can be either. If the family doesn't feel like they get support, they can reach out to the FSLW (the school's principal can make the call).

Comment: EIPS works to meet families where they're at.

Comment: If kids are sick, they should be home as they're not in a good mental space to learn. This initiative is intended for issues and concerns beyond illness.

COSC Sharing

ASSURANCE REVIEWS: SCHOOL COUNCIL EXPERIENCES – Lesley Williams, COSC Chair and Chelsea Pretzlaw, COSC Vice-Chair

- **Mills Haven Elementary:** This was my first assurance review, and it was a little intimidating going in, but the Board members were very welcoming. There were a lot of acronyms, so having a cheat sheet might be beneficial to increase understanding. It was fantastic hearing from other schools. Mills Haven council created a "Raven Fund," which is a set amount of funds put aside for the administration to utilize at their discretion. This is to support at-risk students' needs.
- **Woodbridge Farms Elementary:** We have Harvest Basket Days—a basket of fruits and veggies set out for all students. Kids love it and there's no stigma around if you grab something to eat.
- **École Parc Élémentaire:** Our school has a fruit bowl in the office that kids can grab from, in addition to some pantry supplies for kids who need lunch. Sometimes if you talk to managers in grocery stores about what you're doing, they're very supportive and want to help. At my assurance review, it felt like a lot of conversation—not really addressing real concerns or issues.
- **Ardrossan Junior Senior High:** Being in person was way better than online. It was more engaging, and it felt like I got three times more out of the experience.
- **Lakeland Ridge:** I appreciated the opportunity to hear from other schools' challenges and achievements. Thank you to the Division for inviting us to the table.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:02 P.M.

Next COSC Meeting

DATE: Feb. 1, 2023

TIME: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

LOCATION: EIPS Central Services building, boardroom.