

NOMINATED SCHOOL DIVISION: Elk Island Public Schools
NOMINATOR: Krista Scott

Demonstrate how the nominated school division exemplifies inspirational practices supporting school council efforts to benefit student learning and school division success in one or more of the following areas:

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND SENIOR ADMINISTRATION HIGHLY VALUE THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNCILS AND LOOK TO THEM TO PROVIDE PARENTAL INPUT:
Significant focus area

The Division encourages school councils to participate as active partners in the operation of their schools to build a supportive school community and to act in an advisory capacity to the Principal. Priority 3 of the EIPS 4 Year Education Plan is to Enhance Public Education Through Effective Engagement. Goal 1: Parent and Caregiver Engagement communicates the value that both the Board and Senior Administration give to school councils and family engagement and allows for measurable and codified results in this area on an annual basis. EIPS believes that parents and caregivers are children's first teachers and supports and encourages involvement from the early years through to completion of grade 12. Through the Committee of School Councils to local school councils, both the board and senior administration include families in important communication and engagement. Board Policy and Administrative Procedure support the value of school councils and set a standard for operations within EIPS.

ENCOURAGES COLLABORATION AND SHARING OF BEST PRACTICES WITH INTENTIONAL GATHERINGS OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL DIVISION SCHOOL COUNCILS
Significant focus area

EIPS strongly supports a regular COSC meeting hosted in the central board room at EIPS on the first Wednesday of every month. In addition to providing a space for the meeting, EIPS supports COSC by providing a communications liaison who works closely with COSC executive. The superintendent, associate superintendent, directors and other central office staff give regular presentations to COSC that closely align in content and timeline with presentations given to school based leadership. The chair of the board of trustees gives a regular report and trustee

attendance at COSC is strongly encouraged. In order to ensure equitable access for all school councils across EIPS, COSC is offered in a hybrid format. EIPS supports and encourages the autonomy of COSC as a group that belongs to parents, is steered by parents, and must prioritize an agenda and content that is meaningful to parents and school councils across the division. In addition EIPS distributes meeting reminders, agendas, minutes, follow ups and posts meeting packages and minutes including embedded presentations to the EIPS website for public access. EIPS COSC has been an independent parent organization for decades and board policy and division policy reflect the importance of COSC.

ACTS AS A RESOURCE FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL COUNCILS AND MULTI SCHOOL COUNCIL ORGANIZATIONS

Significant focus area

EIPS prioritizes individual school councils by setting expectations for school based leadership to engage the school community in the establishment and healthy participation of school council. Trustee attendance at school council meetings is embedded in board policy. Trustees attend regular school council meetings, report on board business as it relates to individual school communities, and carry the voice of school council members back to the board. Trustees and school based leadership encourage participation in the division COSC and trustees vote annually to sponsor a number of school council members from different schools to attend the ASCA conference. In addition to covering membership fees for any school council that wishes to be a member of ASCA, division resources are available to track and manage access to the Alberta School Council Engagement Grant.

ESTABLISHES A PROCESS FOR THE MULTI SCHOOL COUNCIL ORGANIZATION TO BE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIVISION EDUCATION PLAN

Significant focus area

As part of the Assurance Framework and as a result of board policy and administrative procedure parents are involved in the development of the division education plan and school education plans at the COSC level as well as at the school level. Budget planning and reporting at the district level and school level are expected to be communicated for the purpose of receiving parent feedback.

INTRODUCES CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY, AND SHARES THE WORK OF THE MULTI SCHOOL COUNCIL ORGANIZATION

Significant focus area

EIPS is a geographically large and diverse school division and acknowledges the value and importance of each community by going into the communities to engage families where they live and build relationships with chambers of commerce, business communities and locally elected and provincial officials. Community stakeholders, including parents, are invited to participate in engagement exercises, surveys, and virtual opportunities for learning. While Alberta Education surveys parents in grades 4,7,and 10 as part of the Assurance Framework, EIPS surveys parents annually across all grades to ensure a broad parent perspective. Communication is clear and available on the EIPS website, through social media platforms, by email, and more recently our superintendent has used the you tube channel to speak directly to stakeholders to explain the process leading up to recommendations that will affect communities and families. The board communicates quarterly with all parents identifying and reporting on advocacy efforts for board priorities. The board continues to live stream board meetings and through board policy provides stakeholders an opportunity to bring a delegation to the board for consideration at the public board meetings.

DEVELOPS PARTNERSHIPS AND/OR INITIATIVES THAT ENCOURAGE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING AND DIVISION-WIDE IMPROVEMENT

Significant focus area

Each November school council chairs are invited to participate in an annual assurance review hosted by the board. There is an expressed expectation by the board and the superintendent that any interested parent will be given a copy of the full annual assurance results package. At the review, senior administration, school administrators, school council chairs, and trustees gather to discuss the annual results, and share strengths and growth areas. School council chairs are given a question in advance that they are called on to discuss during the review. This opportunity creates accountability, facilitates a broader understanding of programming and performance across the division and helps all participants to consider how student learning and achievement can be supported moving

forward. Following the review, COSC roundtable sharing often results in collaboration between school councils or shared initiatives throughout the division.

MODELS PRACTICES OR APPROACHES TO RETAIN AND/OR RECRUIT NEW REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL SCHOOL COUNCILS

Significant focus area

Through school based administration, information about COSC is shared and each fall the board hosts a pizza meet and greet, inviting school council chairs or representatives to attend with their principal in order to create a warm welcome and common understanding around the purpose of COSC and role of school council.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION (2 letters of support)

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Division School Council Engagement Award

I am writing to support Krista Scott's nomination of Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) for the Alberta School Councils' Association Division School Council Engagement Award.

I have been involved with EIPS as a parent on school council since 2008.

Additionally, I have attended their Committee of School Councils for twelve years, including seven years serving as Chair.

During my time with EIPS, I have seen consistent engagement with parents in a variety of ways.

- Every fall, Assurance Reviews are held, and parents are invited to participate. They are given questions to consider and are invited to share their perspective and experience.
- During 2020, EIPS held value scoping sessions to determine the best option to present to Alberta Education as a replacement project for Sherwood Heights Junior High. There were several schools represented, and each of those schools invited parents to participate. I attended and contributed actively to the conversation; I felt respected and that my perspective was valued and important.
- EIPS has the oldest COSC in the province; it predates the creation of Elk Island Public Schools and was formed as the Committee of School Advisory Councils for Strathcona County Public Schools in the 1980s. Since shortly

after its formation, it became parent owned, but supported by the division. This remains true today.

- A recent example of parent engagement is with the French Immersion decision. There were proposals, engagement sessions, surveys and a recommendation to the board. The new Superintendent withdrew her recommendation to conduct further research and then changed her recommendation. In the communication to families, she included detailed rationale and she also recorded a video so she could be sure that parents fully understood the reasons for the recommendations.
- While Alberta Education invites parents of students in grades 4, 7 & 10 to complete the Assurance Model survey, EIPS surveys all parents annually to ensure they understand the full data picture.
- EIPS has a policy around school fees that requires the principal to present current fees to parents at school council (and to gather feedback more broadly) and then a month or two later, to seek input on proposed fees for the upcoming year.
- The current Superintendent and Associate Superintendent are both committed to engaging parents and are open to meeting and hearing concerns. I firmly believe that parents who have questions or are struggling to understand would be met with kindness, understanding and support.
- EIPS held 2 different engagement sessions for the Sherwood Heights Replacement School Project where they shared designs. Attendees were able to provide feedback which was shared with the architect firm who made changes based on that feedback.
- Board Policy states that trustees are expected to attend school council meetings and each trustee has designated schools they attend. They bring a trustee report, but also listen to feedback from parents and school council members so they gain a greater understanding of what is happening to better inform them as they are making decisions around the board table.

As a parent in Elk Island Public Schools for approximately fifteen years, I believe that this school division is a great example for how they engage parents (and the community). It is embedded in their Division Education Plan as a goal, but also in a variety of different strategies. The Superintendent has repeatedly said that parents are critical to student success and her actions match her words. Her fundamental belief around the important role parents play trickles down through her senior leadership team, principals and teachers.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacquie Surgenor Gaglione

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Division School Council Engagement Award

I am writing to support my nomination of Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) for the Alberta School Councils' Association Division School Council Engagement Award. I have participated in school councils in EIPS for 14 years. Over the arc of this time I have sat on the executive for 3 school councils as well as our district committee of school councils. Many things have changed over the course of these years and my involvement has been varied as well but my focus has always been on education. I want to share a recent example of family engagement as our school district was embarking on a shift in French immersion programming. As part of a 3 year engagement strategy and as a result of projected enrollment pressures in the program, the board initiated a lengthy and robust consultation process last school year which culminated in a recommendation report being submitted to the board in November. As is often the case, change is very disruptive to communities and there were several communities that would have been impacted by the recommendation. Conversations were taking place at local school council tables and at COSC. Trustees were hearing from parents in emails and in person. The superintendent was listening and making herself available after COSC meetings to hear from parents. Parents had brought delegations to board meetings in months leading up to the November recommendation. Throughout this process, the positions of superintendent and associate superintendent had been filled by new candidates who were familiar with the broad engagement and data surrounding the changes to the french immersion program. And then something bewildering happened. The superintendent removed the recommendation and sent out an email to all parents across the division explaining that new information had come to light that required further examination. We waited and in December were told that a new recommendation would be coming to the board in January. When the board package was released to the public 3 days prior to the meeting, the recommendation was included along with the complete data package. In addition the superintendent again emailed all families with a 10 minute you tube video where she explained the process clearly and transparently and gave rationale to the new recommendation which included having heard from staff and families about impacts that had otherwise not been considered. In this email she again direct linked the recommendation in the board package and invited any interested person to attend the upcoming board meeting either in person or virtually. I

attended that board meeting in person and was overcome by the consideration our superintendent and trustees gave to families. This entire process is an indication of how division goals, policy, and administrative procedure impact the engagement of families in EIPS. Continued commitment to growth in this area means that best practices are identified and built upon and growth areas are identified and addressed through intentional planning and assessment. For these reasons I believe that EIPS demonstrates *effective, inclusive, and collaborative system-wide practices that, through the efforts of a division-wide, multi-school council organization of representatives, have an identifiable impact supporting school council efforts to benefit student learning and school division success* and is deserving of the Alberta School Councils' Association Division School Council Engagement Award.

Thank you for your consideration,
Krista Scott