

# What is Advocacy?

**Advocacy**     **ad·vo·ca·cy**     (ăd'və-kə-sē)

## **Noun**

*active support of an idea or cause, especially the act of pleading or arguing for something.*

*public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.*

**Advocacy** is an activity by an individual or group which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

**Advocacy** in all its forms seeks to ensure that people, particularly those who are most vulnerable in society, are able to:

- have their voice heard on issues that are important to them
- defend and safeguard their rights
- have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives

**Advocacy** is a process of supporting and enabling people to:

- express their views and concerns
- access information and services
- defend and promote their rights and responsibilities
- explore choices and options

*There are several forms of advocacy, each representing a different approach in a way to initiate changes in society.*

**Advocacy** represents the series of actions taken and issues highlighted to change the “*what is*” into a “*what should be*”, considering that this “*what should be*” is a more decent and a more just society.

Those actions, which vary with the political, economic and social environment in which they are conducted, have several points in common. They:

- question the way policy is administered
- raise significant issues
- are inclusive and engaging
- propose policy solutions
- open up public debate

*When advice with the potential to affect change in Alberta schools across the province is given, it becomes **advocacy**.*

School councils can come together to advise the Ministry of Education on matters that pertain to provincial educational policy and directions.

This form of *advising or advocacy* is undertaken through the government recognized provincial association that represents the voice of parents in public education - the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA).

ASCA participates in provincial advisory committees that regularly collaborate with Alberta Education and the other provincial organizations representing teachers, school trustees, superintendents and universities.

## **ASCA Advocacy: The Parent Voice - Effecting Change in Public Education**

The Alberta School Councils' Association, (ASCA), is a provincial organization that presents the parent and school council perspective to government and others on public education issues.

Working with education organizations, the ASCA advocates to effect positive change in public education policy, programs and practice.

ASCA members establish the policy and advocacy efforts of the association annually through a democratic issue resolution process.

The **annual process** begins at the conclusion of one AGM – with a **first call** for issue resolutions to be considered at the next AGM (12 months later).

**Parents** on school councils in Alberta identify issues in education that they would like addressed, changed or resolved, to effect change at the provincial level.

**Issues for change** are submitted as **resolutions** to the ASCA provincial office, with a **second call** at the beginning of the school year, with a deadline to submit by the end of the calendar year preceding the scheduled AGM.

All members of ASCA have opportunity to provide input to the proposed *draft* resolutions submitted by those presenting them (sponsors), before they become final, as presented to the assembly for consideration at the AGM.

**Resolutions** are discussed, debated and voted upon by attending delegates at the AGM, and if passed, become policy of the association.

Each year ASCA is invited to represent the advocacy positions (*policy*) established by the membership at provincial level committees.

ASCA members bring forward issues, in the form of resolutions, at the annual general meeting (AGM).

If the resolution is endorsed or voted in by the majority of the assembly at the meeting, it becomes *policy*.

This policy forms the basis for advocating change to the **Ministry of Education**.

**Alberta Education** has a three-year business plan that identifies goals aligned with the Government of Alberta's business plan.

Alberta Education is required to report the achievement of its goals, on an annual basis, as part of the *government's accountability to the public*.

**Parents** are involved in the development of goals and reviews of Alberta Education's business plan as requested, through the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA).

The ASCA is invited, along with other education organizations to send representatives to the provincial table when items are under discussion.

*Parents bring a valuable perspective to the establishment and review of provincial goals for education.*