

# Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA)

## Submission to the Task Force on Teaching Excellence

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### Background

The ASCA Board of Directors has developed its submission from the following sources:

- ASCA policy
- One-on-one conversations with school council parents
- Board meeting discussions
- And the report prepared and submitted to them from the ASCA Advisory Panel on Teaching Excellence

### ASCA Advisory Panel on Teaching Excellence

The ASCA Board of Directors struck the **Advisory Panel on Teaching Excellence** (APTE) in September 2013. The Panel's mandate was to provide the ASCA Board of Directors with parent perspectives on teaching excellence, and share ideas on teaching quality assurance.

The Panel was comprised of a group of parents from school councils who shared an interest in teaching excellence for every Alberta student. The Panel met face-to-face in October and November to discuss what changes are needed to better support teachers, so that teaching excellence is the norm for every student. In their discussions the group referred to reports, current research, policy and processes which guide teaching in Alberta.

In addition, panel members spoke with peers one-on-one and at school council meetings and Council of School Councils (COSC) meetings.

To better understand the views of Alberta parents on this important topic two short surveys were developed, posted on the ASCA website, and communicated to a broader audience through Twitter. The rich and thoughtful responses of parents on the topic of teaching excellence provided fertile ground on which to base the Panel's report to the ASCA Board of Directors. Elements of the report are incorporated into this submission and the report in its entirety is appended to this submission.

### ASCA Submission

As the education stakeholder organization recognized as the 'voice of parents', ASCA is pleased to offer the following thoughts framed by three questions provided by the Task Force on Teaching Excellence.

*What does your organization believe to be the most important issues related to the assurance of teaching excellence in Alberta? That is, what one to three important issues do you believe the Task Force should focus on in making its recommendations to the Minister?*

**Three main issues have been identified by ASCA:**

## **1. Preparation of education students, their transition into practice, and their ongoing support to promote excellence in teaching and learning**

This includes:

- The uptake of potential education students -- entrance requirements – who qualifies, what is the standard for entry?
- Training program elements – practical knowledge gained through experiential opportunities versus theory and classroom time – what is the right balance?
- Transition into practice -- how new teachers are inducted, mentored, and supported in the early years, including development opportunities for new teachers
- Teacher support in early, mid and late career, including teachers teaching outside of their area of expertise/training; veteran teachers moved to new positions – are there supports in place to assist them?
- The use of coordinated ongoing professional development to encourage better practice

## **2. The definition of “teacher” and clarification of role of the teacher**

This includes:

- Who can be defined a ‘teacher’ in the classroom (e.g. others with subject area expertise but no Bachelor of Education degree), including teacher certification
- An individual’s personal investment and the collective investment of teachers to assure the learning success of students
- The definition of teacher ‘work’ – a common definition of what elements are included in teaching (lesson prep, face-to-face teaching time, professional development, teachable moments, supervision, etc.)
- Ensure the ‘right’ people are teaching in the ‘right’ positions because of their skill sets and passions, not because of seniority

## **3. Teaching excellence assurance and teacher accountability**

This includes:

- Teachers’ personal investment to continuously strive for teaching excellence
- A regular formative and summative assessment of individuals’ teaching; a means to remove those individuals whose performance is not to standard, including
  - The role of the principal in teaching excellence assurance, and strengthening the ability of a principal to deal with incompetent teachers
  - The role of parents and students in teaching performance review
- The re-certification of teachers at regular intervals throughout their career
- Formal recognition of teaching excellence
- The role of the teachers’ union in supporting excellence

*Second, what strategies would you suggest could be implemented to address these issues?*

- Review and amend teacher preparation program entrance requirements—raise the bar and ensure the right people are accepted into the program
- Review and adjust teacher preparation programs to include an apprenticeship model of learning -- a system that provides more practical support and knowledge
- Define the role of the teacher; define what is included in teacher's work (not 'workload')
- Empower principals with tools to support formal assessment of teaching excellence; implement policies, structures and promote practices to deal with those individuals who do not aspire to or demonstrate teaching excellence over time
- Introduce province-wide incentives to recognize and promote teaching excellence
- Separate union issues from professional issues
- Introduce a re-certification process for teachers

*What role do you believe your organization should have in the implementation of these strategies?*

- Partner with stakeholder organizations in providing advice on teacher prep programs, as well as determining and defining the role of the teacher and who can teach
- Partner with stakeholders to develop materials for parents/school councils on issues of instructional leadership, board governance and roles, K-12 funding, parental support in classrooms and schools etc.
- Raise awareness among parents and school councils of policies, definitions, practices and structures regarding teacher evaluation, performance issues, and expectations. Give parents a role in teaching evaluation and assessment.
- Assist parents with deepening understanding and awareness of importance of ongoing teacher development and learning
- Provide parents with opportunities to increase their individual and collective knowledge about the K-12 system
- Promote meaningful, respectful understanding and discussion of children's learning between school staff and parents
- Promote greater discussion of aspects of teaching excellence through school councils
- Promote understanding among teachers that parents have an important role to contribute to children's learning success

Respectfully submitted by the Alberta School Councils' Association Board of Directors  
December 20, 2013