

The Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) works to empower parents and school councils, providing information and resources to navigate the ever-changing education landscape in Alberta.

As the Provincial Government has made, and will continue to make, decisions related to education at local, division and provincial levels, the ASCA Board of Directors created this package to encourage local advocacy by parents, school councils, and groups of school councils who wish their MLAs, and the Minister of Education, to be aware of decisions impacting students, teachers and parents in their school communities.

Recent decisions and topics of note, such as the education budget, Choice in Education, the Curriculum Review Panel, the Funding Framework Review, have varying effects on students, their parents and school communities. Decisions regarding our education system for all students will affect us today, and for many years to come.

This package is designed to encourage interaction with MLAs, ideas for reaching out, seeking information and providing a local perspective related to discussions and decisions taking place at the provincial level.

Where to start and what to do?

There are a number of ways that parents can get involved, from following **MLAs** on social media, to writing personalized letters telling their own “stories”, meeting personally with their local MLA, and inviting an MLA to attend a community event. School councils can play an **enabling** role (communicating dates and locations where parents can meet their MLA in a public venue, providing letter templates, and/or distributing facts and data related to their local school community or an **active** role (organizing an MLA meeting in the school, asking questions in person or in writing and posting answers from MLAs on a website or online forum to better inform others).

This resource outlines strategies to assist a school council to decide what level of advocacy is best suited for their community, and how to develop an action plan.

Getting Started

As a school council (which includes the principal), discuss which aspects of advocacy you would like to undertake (encouraging or enabling others to get involved, or playing an active role), using the strategies outlined on pages 2 – 3 for reference to make a decision.

Your school council efforts will make a difference, no matter which activity(ies) you undertake.

It is important to be aware of any district policies in place regarding planned activities. Have your principal check before plans are finalized.

Prepare a plan utilizing the tips, actions and templates provided, to promote and launch your campaign.

For more information, or assistance with your advocacy campaign, call 1.800.661.3470 or email parents@albertaschoolcouncils.ca



School Councils Encouraging and/or Enabling Others to Get Involved

As a school council and as parents, you can advise MLAs and the Minister of Education about your school, and school division's educational needs, so MLAs can engage in informed discussions prior to, and after, making important decisions. A school council is well placed in a school community to take the lead in this area.

The following will give your school council a sense of what is involved in offering information to others.

- Develop a list of all MLAs who represent the geographic areas in which students in your school and/or division, reside along with their contact information (constituency office address, email address, website information, blog and twitter information). You can find information about all provincial MLAs through the [Legislative Assembly](#) website.
- Make the list available to all parents in the school community - post on your school council bulletin board, website, publish in your school council newsletter, send out through your school council email distribution list, post on social media.
- Advertise times and venues where MLAs will be at their constituency office, or will be appearing in a public location – coffee shop visits, community league halls, community events, and encourage people to attend (you may get this information from individual MLAs constituency offices).
- Generate a list of “good questions” or “Facts and Data” related to education discussions and decisions which have had, or will have, an impact of students, parents and teachers in your school or division, for parents to ask or present to MLAs, and distribute or post so people know what to ask. (See “Sample Questions or Facts for MLAs” to follow.)

Note: A good topic for discussion at district-wide gatherings of school councils meeting with their school board is - What are the issues or main concerns arising as a result of the October 24th, 2019 education budget? Take these issues and form them into custom-made questions or statements for MLAs.

School Council Active Involvement in Advocacy

School Councils and/or groups of school councils can host a community meeting with their local MLA(s) - inviting all MLAs representing constituencies of parents of students in their school(s), to ask questions and provide input/feedback to them. In order to host a community meeting, school councils work with their principal to secure appropriate space and ensure district policies are followed.



School Council Advocacy

- Invite all local MLAs to a school council hosted *community meeting* – advertise well in advance and encourage your community to attend (to ask the good questions). A smaller committee of the school council could organize this event and manage details.
- Alternatively, arrange for your whole school council to attend an MLA-community meeting taking place in your area.
- Invite local MLAs to a school council meeting and invite parents of the broader school community to attend. This is a less formal event than the “community meeting” and less work. Inviting to a school council meeting eliminates the need for hall rental, equipment, etc.
- Create and provide questions and/or statements of facts to each MLA; post their answers on your website, or distribute in other ways so all parents can read what the MLAs’ thoughts are on the identified education topics your school council is concerned with
- Host an online forum or use social media platforms to post MLAs’ questions and answers and encourage discussion.
- Encourage individual school council representatives to meet with their MLA(s) and ask questions or provide facts on behalf of the school community.
- Remind parents in the broader school community that their thoughts and experiences are valuable, and that their elected MLA needs to hear from them.

Sample Questions and/or Statements of Facts for MLAs

1. What is your understanding of how the recent decision/discussion related to _____ has effected (will effect) students, parents and teachers in _____ School/School Division?
2. Are you aware that, in _____ School (School Division), a result of the current budget is _____?
3. Did you know that our school (school division) has made the decision to _____, in response to the current budget?
4. Related to the topic of _____, my child’s school (our school division) has made the decision to _____.
5. In _____ School (School Division) # _____ students (families) will be affected by _____, in the following areas _____.



Advocacy Planning Templates

Building Advocacy Awareness and Encouraging Participation of Parent Community

#	Advocacy Action Goals	Who	Start Date	End Date	Resources Needed
1	Communicate information on issues affecting the local school community, encourage people to get active.				
2	Distribute MLA names and contact info (including website, blog, twitter, LinkedIn).				
3	Advertise times and venues where local MLAs will be present/attending.				
4	Develop and distribute/post a set of questions or statement of facts, for MLAs.				

School Council Active Participation in Local Advocacy

#	Advocacy Action Goals	Who	Start Date	End Date	Resources Needed
1	Host an MLA - community meeting; or alternatively, organize school council parents to attend an MLA – community meeting in their area.				
2	Invite all local MLAs to a school council meeting.				
3	Email questions or statements of facts/date to each local MLA; post/share their answers.				
4	Host an online forum or use social media to communicate information shared and learned.				
5	Remind parents to contact/share their thoughts and experiences with their elected officials.				



Letter Writing

School Councils, and individuals, can write letters to MLAs and the Minister of Education, detailing their thoughts and experiences, related to recent, current and/or ongoing decisions and discussions affecting students, parents and teachers in their local school and/or division.

- If a letter is sent from the school council by email, it is considerate to copy (cc) school administration and the superintendent.
- If a (hard copy) letter from the school council is mailed, it is considerate to let school administration and the superintendent know this, and provide a copy to them if requested.
- Individual school council members can also write and send individual letters as concerned parents who want to elevate an education decision or discussion as an important issue for their MLA to be aware of.
- Letters should be personalized, share a story, and/or list specific areas of concerns.

Sample Letter to an MLA *from an Individual*

Individual's Name

Individual's Address

Individual's email address

Individual's phone number

Dear MLA _____ (or Minister) _____:

As my elected Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Alberta, representing _____, you should be aware of my concerns related to the decision(s) made and/or discussions taking place, effecting the education of my children in _____ School(s).

INSERT PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OR THOUGHTS HERE

I look forward to your response, and thank you in advance, for taking the time to address this/these important education topic(s).

Individual's Name



Sample Letter to an MLA from a School Council

School Council Name

School Name

School Address

Contact Name

Contact email and phone

Dear MLA _____ (or Minister) _____:

As an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Alberta, representing _____, you should be aware of our concerns related to the decision(s) made and/or discussions taking place, effecting the education of the children in _____ School(s).

INSERT SCHOOL COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES, CONSEQUENCE, SCHOOL/DIVISION FACTS, DATA HERE

We look forward to your response, and thank you in advance, for taking the time to address this/these important education topic(s). Responses will be shared publicly with school community members.

Chair Name or Member Names,

School Council

School

