

ASCA School Council Engagement Task Force – **January 2020 RESULTS**
21 Responses submitted (as of April 15, 2020)

The feedback your school council parent representative compiles and submits to the ASCA is greatly appreciated by the Board to assist in their considerations on education issues in Alberta.

The Board utilizes information gathered to inform the advocacy work of the association. This may include advising at external committee meetings, sharing with appropriate Ministries or provincial education organizations, and the potential for Board sponsored Advocacy Resolutions.

Request for input regarding “**Learning Environments**”.

Background/context:

Outlined within the ASCA 2019-2020 conditional grant with Alberta Education is a deliverable (action) to gather input related to *school councils’ contributions to safe, caring and healthy learning environments, which respect and protect the constitutional rights and safety of all students.* (Outcome 3.2.2)

Note – this outcome/deliverable included in the conditional grant was (pre-release of the Ministry business plan) derived from the [United Conservative Party Policy Declaration 2018](#), Education, Vision (page 5).

1) Does your school council actively contribute to providing/ensuring *a safe, caring and healthy learning environment, respecting/protecting the constitutional rights and safety of all students?*

Yes (21) No (0) unsure (0)

If yes, please describe how:

- We are always mindful that the results and feedback regarding a sense of citizenship at the school in the District surveys are addressed at school. All the student rights are respected by educating staff and volunteers about this.
- Our School Council has just recently introduced a program to provide foods for girls who are coming to school hungry. We also have a program that provides noodles for those who have forgotten; or do not have enough lunch. We also have a Fresh Fruit Program that enables students to take a piece of fruit that is available in the Main Office. Council also provides funds for a recycling program in the school. We conduct Parent Education conducted in collaboration with the Community Education Service: out of the Children's Hospital; on designated Saturday mornings throughout the school year. These programs centre around Mental Health; Community and Family issues. We also provide speakers for the students at lunch time during the winter months. These speakers come from different employment areas and inform students of the workplace; specifically from the point of view of Women in the workplace.
- We promote a safe; caring and healthy learning environment in all of our programs; special events; fundraisers and all interactions with parents and students in our community. We try to always maintain a positive and supportive relationship with our school administration; teachers and students in all of our interactions.
- By working with the fundraising association to help support nutritional program for all students. By supporting school initiatives. By being informed and consulted about matters related to creating a safe; caring and healthy learning environment.

- Because we have an open forum with the school administration that we can bring forwards any concerns.
- We provided funding for an outdoor classroom; different instruments; vision for more regio style classrooms... We also advocated for easier access for special needs students; our wheelchair ramp and handicap parking spaces were inadequate.
- Posters, Colin Kartchner presentation, foundation of ProD training, one of teacher quality standards is to build healthy relationships. If teachers are focused on that, bullying will be stopped. Every month we have collaborative response meetings, where teachers discuss plans to meet the needs of struggling students.
- Meeting to collaborate support; and encourage our staff; other parents; school initiatives; programs; students and initiatives.
- Child safety is at the top of concerns for the student council; as I have observed personally. Decisions made always take into play children safety.
- Our school council; in concert with school administrators ; recognizes that safe; caring and healthy learning doesn't 'just happen'. We set out our annual plan and work together; parents; council; staff and admin; to ensure that we are achieving this common goal.
- I can see the actions at school council events. The caring definitely shows more in the recent years. The school council ensures that the needs and voice of our children are addressed. They email the parents and give a heads up.
- Our school council actively participates in discussions; supports student activities; impacts policy by helping to set priorities; provides feedback; requests information sessions on topics of concern to parents.
- Our school council helps in a variety of ways including: running lice checks; supporting the school goal of protecting mental health; doing parent education; lobbying for traffic changes; and funding sensory bins; physical education kits and paws to read (which assists students with their literary needs).
- It is a standing item; debrief with school management after incidents.
- We are informed every month of the happening since our school by our principal and given in depth info on all programs brought in and made available to our students in a wide range of topics for all age levels.
- We have discussion and give input regarding the school handbook. This is done on a yearly basis. -new this year; we gave input on a school wide parent survey that covers the topics listed in the question.
- We meet regularly as a parent council to give and receive input from the Principle and his staff. We offer suggestions and are given the opportunity to offer input.
- We hold regular school council meetings to encourage involvement and open communication.
- Members volunteer at almost every school event; talking to parents and guests making sure that everyone feels welcome. Also we send out surveys getting ideas from parents on how we can meet their needs so their children have a sense of citizenship at the school.
- Parent volunteers help out with learning where they can. Reading with students and helping out in the classrooms where they can. Our school council has been providing monthly healthy snacks for all students keeping allergies and culture in mind.

Additional comments:

- Is not the School Council's job to ensure the 'above' Constitutional rights; safe environment..etc. It should not even be a question.
- Our school council has not had concerns about the school's or the division's efforts to create safe and caring environments and has never viewed our constitutional rights or our students' as being at risk.
- These regular school council meetings foster great communication. I believe shifting the focus towards big picture items and more holistic discussions this school year has been very healthy. This shift in focus has allowed for meaningful conversations in many areas including 'safe and caring' schools.

2) Has the funding your school received from your School Division this year had an impact on your students and/or school community?

Yes (18) No (2) unsure (1)

Comments:

- With the budget freeze; the school needs more help from the parent association to cover the costs of some things; such as replacing books and etc.
- How would I; as a School Council Chair; know this? Is this not the Board of Directors that governs that? As a School Council Chair I am responsible for ensuring that we can provide services for the parents and students; and we raise money to accommodate that.
- We have less support in the school (for example our EA's and support staff have been cut) and our class sizes have grown significantly putting more strain on our teachers and administration; who are already taking on so much more.
- Although it has not directly impacted the school and learning environment this year it has created a feeling scarcity and instability as the division had to tap into reserves for it not to affect schools this year.
- We lost a teacher with a .5 position; we've lost professional development days for our teachers; we've lost some counselling supports. We're anticipating losing more teacher supports and expecting increasing fees; potentially losing a trustee due to deficits.
- Funding has allowed us to pay teachers, administration, have a warm place to learn with curricula. Budget cuts forced us to lose 2 EAs which has forced us to be thinner in our individual supports across the school.
- Our division has been very helpful and supportive with providing dollars and support when requested. We don't feel that same support and respect from the ministry.
- We lost a program starting in 20/21 school year due to funding shortfalls. We will lose teaching positions in 20/21 school year due to funding shortfalls. The district has not provided adequate funding to remediate learning disabilities for applicable students.
- Funding decreased; regardless of how the government would like to try and spin it. That decreased funding has meant a reduction in courses being offered and a collapse of others so that class sizes have increased. It has also impacted the school's ability to offer supports to K&E and ELL students.
- Our school lost 4 Educational Assistants; which has greatly impacted the students. We have also had reduced budgets for classroom libraries and science projects.
- School has started tracking paper usage; cut class budgets. Doing what they can to help support the district during this time. Using more technology where they can.
- Our School Division used money they had in reserves to make up the shortfall.
- The cutbacks did not adversely effect our school.
- The funding we receive from the division has massive impacts on the quality of education that students in our community school receive. Stable; predictable funding; in particular; allows careful planning and administration of those dollars. For example; with stable and predictable funding school leaders can plan replacement/upgrades of necessary equipment. The majority of the dollars allocated to our community school are used for staffing (as is the case across the province).
- The FRA now has a bigger role in providing items like leveled home reading books and subsidizing costs for trips to offset the shortcomings in the new budget; with COVID we have been unable to fundraiser which add another layer of strain on the budget.
- We have had quite a few changes in our school with the funding model changes. We have seen an increase in class sizes to numbers never seen in our school. Teachers have been laid off and classes combined. There was a major staff change over due to multiple lay offs of support staff in our district. It has been a very difficult year for students with all the big changes that have happened in such a short period of time.

3) Has the funding your school received from your School Division this year resulted in any changes of being able to provide *a safe, caring and healthy learning environment, respecting/protecting the constitutional rights and safety of all students?*

Yes (8) No (10) unsure (3)

If yes, please describe how:

- With all of the government cuts to Education in this Province...I find that these questions are out of order.
- Less supervision - Administrators picking up the slack making them less available in other areas potentially impacting the safety of students- Less EA Support for students with high needs and increased class sizes making it difficult for teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively- Less administrative Support.
- We're resilient. It's not ideal but we're still meeting the standard.
- Family Liaison; health and wellness programs that support the students. We are all aware that if any of our students need help or extra support we can ask for help and will get it privately and safely.
- The activities including field trips; and monthly nutritional snacks supported by school council; have had a direct positive benefit for student happiness.
- Our abilities are limited NOT by our public school division; but from the education ministry. More; and RELIABLE; support from the ministry will help us create more opportunities for all of our students.
- The learning environment has changed. Loss of higher academic programming for all students. The current level of funding does not allow for the respecting/protecting of the constitutional rights for the children with learning disabilities to receive adequate remediation to ensure meaningful access to general education that is available to all students.
- Mental health is a HUGE component in the challenges that students are dealing with and the school tries to focus on these so that students can be ready to learn. Unfortunately; with the reductions; more Admin and counselor time is spent teaching meaning that the ability to provide these vital supports is significantly impacted.
- Nutritious grant and FNMI funding.
- Same as above: We have had quite a few changes in our school with the funding model changes. We have seen an increase in class sizes to numbers never seen in our school/school district. Teachers have been laid off and classes combined. There was a major staff change over due to multiple lay offs of support staff in our district. Half of our support staff were replaced with experienced staff; however; they came from experience with JR. high age needs to a K-6 school so there was a learning curve for everyone.

Additional comments:

- I feel like there is something else that you want School Councils to do...as a Chair of the Council my job is very busy with ensuring the wellbeing of the students in the school and that we provide additional funds to teachers and classrooms that can better serve the students. I am not sure where you think that Money received from the Division has any impact on Constitutional rights?? All moneys go into the education of the students and that is naturally within the bounds of a safe; caring environment. Thank you to our wonderful teachers who deliver under all budgetary limitations.
- Our school has done an incredible job of working within the confines of the budget and working together as a community to ensure our students are safe and cared for and their rights protected.

There is concern about how the lack of increased funding will continue to impact our school as it grows.

- Although the funding has not affected much this year our school and other schools in the division will see the effects next year as there will not be reserves available to cover the shortcomings from grants that were cut. This will definitely effect the schools ability to provide a safe; caring and healthy learning environment with less money for staffing leading to larger class sizes and fewer supports.
- The mental health issues have been put on the back burner because of less counselling opportunities.
- We feel our school and division does an excellent job supporting our diverse student and staff body regardless of funds. We are open and inclusive of ALL students; regardless of their cultural; socioeconomic or academic background and abilities. Our division wholeheartedly supports the importance of mental health initiatives; sees inherent value in what EA's bring to students; both the ones they work with directly as well as the others in their classrooms. Our division recognizes they are in the business of not only education; but relationship building.
- So far it's satisfactory however funding from the school division has allowed all staff to remain for this school year; but it is unsure what will happen next year. Less teachers means less supervisions per student; which can lead to safety concerns.
- Instead of this government supporting the multitude of private; special interests; they need to focus on the real issue; supporting students in public school classrooms so that they are mentally healthy and ready to tackle their course load.
- Our students needs are still being met in all the above categories; but the toll is being taken out on the Teachers and remaining Educational Assistants (EAs). Both the teachers and EAs are struggling with compassion fatigue. As they are needing to spend more time and energy meeting the needs of the students. We are worried about staff burn out and sickness.
- No change from previous years.
- Our School Division was able to dip into their reserves to make up the short fall this year. If the short fall of funding continues and reserves are depleted; changes may happen.
- The maintenance of the Nutrition Grant allowed the creation of a 'Nutritious Lunch' program that provided a healthy lunch for all interested students once a week. Additionally; FNMI funding provided opportunities for staff to participate in Professional Development as well as the ability to purchase resources to support First Nations learners and learning outcomes.
- No because the measures put in place to provide a safe and caring environment were there before the changes to the funding model were made.