

DATE: February 1, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director, Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE STAFF: Cathy MacDonald, Carrie Rosa

REFERENCE: Section 14, [School Councils Regulation](#), Alberta Education
[AA.BP Stakeholder Relations](#)

ISSUE

Providing a summary of highlights from 2020-2021 school annual reports submitted to Communications.

BACKGROUND

Alberta Education, through the *Education Act* and, more specifically, Section 14 of the [School Councils Regulation](#), requires all school council chairs to provide an annual report to the Edmonton Public School Board by September 30 of each year.

CURRENT SITUATION

These reports are now collected via a Google form so we can more easily review and share content of the annual reports.

KEY POINTS

- Summary of main areas school councils provided support to
- Areas we may want to review and provide more guidance on going forward

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary, Summary of Findings

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School Council Annual Report Highlights Summary Summary of Findings

The findings in the 2020–21 School Council Annual Report reflect the activities of 167 schools who responded. Please note some schools are unable to establish a school council; when this is the case, principals establish an advisory committee and do not necessarily have an annual report like full school councils.

Alberta Education, through the *Education Act* and Section 14 of the *School Councils Regulation*, requires all school council chairs to provide an annual report to Edmonton Public Schools by September 30 of each year. For the 2020–21 annual report, the Division again used a Google form to collect school council annual report information.

As per Section 55 of the *Education Act*, school councils may advise the principal and Board on school matters, consult with the principal to ensure students have opportunities to meet education standards set by the Minister, consult with the principal on fiscal matters and perform other functions authorised under the regulations.

The findings collected through the 2020–21 annual report form indicate that despite some limitations in school councils' ability to be as involved inside schools, they continue to live up to their mandate to act as an advisory group to the principal and school community. Information collected also indicates that councils support schools through additional activities.

Predominant activities undertaken

School councils are composed mainly of parents of students who attend the school. This group of parents function primarily to provide feedback and advice to the principal on a variety of school functions and decisions. They provide a strong communication link between school administration and families. Of particular note last year, many school councils explained a key role they played was collecting and sharing COVID-19 related information in their school communities. Some school councils also play an important part in liaising between school administration and the fundraising association to inform the potential use of any funds raised.

In order of highest to lowest participation rates, here are the main areas school councils noted they were involved with during the 2020–21 school year:

- **77 per cent** supported teaching and learning within the school (e.g., supporting cultural awareness and anti-racism education, preparing library bins for classes, fostering community partnerships, etc.)
- **62 per cent** supported special events in support of the school plan (e.g., promoting, volunteering for events such as virtual READ IN Week)
- **49 per cent** informed/advised principal on the school's budget (e.g., input into priorities)
- **47 per cent** informed/advised principal on the school's education plan (e.g., priorities)
- **41 per cent** informed/provided input to principal on the school's results review
- **35 per cent** advocated for the needs of the school community to the city, province and other groups (e.g., writing letters to elected officials about draft curriculum)
- **26 per cent** provided input to help inform the work of the Board of Trustees (e.g., meetings with ward Trustee)
- **20 per cent** worked on joint projects with the community or another school in support of the school plan (e.g., anti-racism, breakfast cart program)

- **20 per cent** informed the work of the Alberta School Councils' Association through an engagement task force or annual general meeting

Additional activities

Following are some additional activities school councils noted supporting:

- Collected and shared information with parents regarding updates on school protocol during the pandemic
- Discussed and advised on COVID-19 re-entry plan
- Worked with community to help set up breakfast cart program for students in need
- Set up grants committee
- Engaged Trustee regarding school renaming
- Created and distributed quarterly online newsletter
- Networked with community leagues
- Promoted and supported diversity (e.g., Black History Month, anti-racism training, Chinese New Year, drumming arts day, Cabane a Sucre activities)
- Organized outdoor activities like skating, health and wellness activities, and supported virtual field trips
- Provided education sessions on mental health support for students
- Organized hampers for families in need, and snacks and lunches for students
- Organized clothing drives
- Organized virtual guest speakers
- Organized guided river valley walks where students learned about some of Edmonton's history from an Indigenous perspective
- Helped facilitate virtual sessions like open house, orientation and welcome nights

Frequency of school council meetings

- 67 per cent met every two weeks
- 15 per cent met monthly
- The remainder met on varying and fluctuating frequencies

How school councils met

- 94 per cent met virtually
- One per cent met in person
- Five per cent had a mix of in person and virtual meetings

Meeting participation levels

- 41 per cent had same participation as in past
- 32 per cent saw an increase in participation
- 27 per cent experienced a decrease in participation

Funds handled

- 14 per cent of school councils indicated their school council handled some funds last year
- The funds were typically received and raised through initiatives like grants, money from their fundraising association, parent donations, and art and card sales
- Funds raised went towards a variety of things such as farewell and cultural celebrations (e.g., Black History Month), and staff appreciation (e.g., coffee cards)

Successes some school councils experienced

- Virtual meetings meant dedicated parents attended regularly— meetings were more accessible/easier to attend, less intimidating for some parents and easier to schedule
- Many councils concentrated more on staff appreciation initiatives

Challenges some school councils faced

- Most school councils noted they were unable to organize and participate in many activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Many schools struggled to get parents involved, interested and engaged (lack of interest, apathy, burn out, other priorities to deal with)
- It was challenging to organize school council activities while also doing online school with kids
- Some challenges arose with using online meeting platforms/technology
- There is a different dynamic/less connection meeting online:
 - Harder to get people to speak up at online meetings
 - Harder to get to know larger groups of parents that just appear as little squares on a meeting screen
 - Harder to develop strong relationships

Some common school council goals for the 2021–22 school year

- Increase the level of parent/guardian involvement/participation within their school community
- Succession planning
- Continue to keep parents informed and involved
- Continue to provide meaningful monthly sessions and presentations
- Support school initiatives and celebrations the best they can
- Support school planning and advise principal on matters like budgets and priorities
- Support staff and principal wherever possible

Evaluation of new report collection format put in place last year

Following last year's annual report collection, Communications surveyed submittees and the general consensus was the process was good. One main suggestion that was noted is they would have liked to receive a copy of the answers they submitted. On this year's collection form, this feature was updated so submittees could receive a copy of their responses to save and share with their council.