

Responses to the paper received from:

- individual parents who are or who have participated with their school council(s)
- ASCA Life members
- School councils
- School Boards
- A COSC (Council of School Councils)

Overall, five themes emerged from the comments submitted. Although the themes are not listed in order of priority based on the number of comments each theme received, they are listed in order of effect. *This is to say that it appears the first theme listed influences the next and so on.*

1. Support for school council(s) as a recognized part of the school community

- a. With only one exception all respondents comments confirmed that school councils are recognized as an established piece of the current school community and the K-12 education system in Alberta

2. Leadership

a. Principals

- i. principal leadership and influence was identified as key to the type of work a school council chooses to engage in
- ii. The majority of respondents recognized a need for training for principals in the areas of school leadership, school council purpose and parental engagement practice in order that school councils might be more focused on the areas of student success and education improvement planning
- iii. There were mixed responses respecting parental involvement in principal selection; generally comments support parents providing input to desirable characteristics of a school leader, however, parent participation in the actual hiring of principals was not as strongly endorsed
- iv. School boards should have the responsibility of preparing their Principal leaders with respect to school councils and parental engagement with the guidance of ASCA and ASBA

b. Parents

- i. Parent leadership was identified almost as often as principal leadership as being a key to effectively functioning school councils as they are currently defined by the legislation
- ii. Training in areas of leadership, engagement, K-12 system knowledge and community practice were all proposed as necessary to creating strong effective parent leaders
- iii. Peer to peer training and knowledge sharing were identified as an established accepted way of continuing to develop and strengthen the parent leadership base, not only in a school, but carrying out into the community of school council practice

3. Involvement

- a. Involvement follows leadership in terms of ongoing school council development and impact on a school community
- b. Involvement of parents on and through school council needs to be further clarified in order that parents are able to consider themselves as involved and contributing, without feeling that they are being asked to 'do more', and without feeling they are 'overburdened' with responsibility for school successes
- c. Involvement is determined by invitation from school parent and principal leaders, but is constrained by individual perceptions of availability
- d. Involvement may be further explored through 'levels' that contribute to the work of a school council and school/student successes
- e. Creating and developing leadership will result in involvement
- f. Community involvement is occurring with school councils and in schools, in some places more readily than others
- g. Parents who are discouraged by school staff in regards to their attempts to be involved in the education of their own children are less likely to consider involvement on a school council level to be something that can effect positive school change

4. Work of School Council

- a. School council work is determined by leadership influence and direction as well as defined by types, and levels of involvement of both parents and community
- b. The majority of the feedback indicate respondents have a clear idea of what the work of school council is, as defined by the current legislation, and suggest that there is ongoing support for this type of work to continue and in many cases to be enhanced
- c. School council work should be relevant to the role of parents in education and the learning successes of students
- d. School councils should be advisory
- e. Given the advancement of the previous themes, school councils are identified as having the opportunity to develop in their effectiveness over time
- f. Opportunities for school council 'work' may increase but school councils should maintain the right to chose what types of work they wish to advise on ❖
- g. School council work should be something that can be captured in best practice, demonstrated, and modeled
- h. A school council focus on enhanced communication strategies and techniques combined with a clearer understanding of the role of parents on school councils by school council members will enhance school council practice

5. Fundraising

- a. A majority of responses recognize that the practice of school council fundraising is detracting from the 'added value role' of school councils in the learning successes of students
- b. A majority of respondents suggest reducing or eliminating the fundraising focus for school councils while ensuring that it is still a recognized avenue of opportunity for parents in a school in order that their students may benefit from practices/technologies/activities that educators feel will enhance learning success
- c. Many school councils in the province have not transitioned from the fundraising body to the school improvement advisory body as outlined by current legislation



❖ *Comments specific to 'school council opportunities for involvement' listed in the discussion paper:*

1. ***A coordinating body for all volunteer/engagement/involvement activities in the school/at the regional level.***

The majority of respondents supported the development of this, but some cautioned that the organization of numerous volunteers may be too big a task, involving too much time and effort. In addition, one respondent thought this task should be left to teachers who knew best who should be invited into the classroom and when. The opportunity for volunteers to work with other schools in the district was also seen to be a possible overreach of teachers' day to day decisions in the classroom.

2. ***Assists with planning and coordinating family engagement events in school community.***

The majority liked this idea but there were cautions around overworking /overburdening school council volunteers.

3. ***Is engaged with selecting the school principal and superintendent.***

This suggestion drew quite a bit of reaction, although it was mixed. The development of a list of characteristics was seen to be appropriate. Respondents who were trustees or educators felt it inappropriate for parents to be included on a principal or superintendent hiring committee. One respondent felt confidential information may not be secure, and that understanding the role of superintendent or principal was too complex for parents. Parent reactions to having the opportunity to participate were mixed.

