

Alberta School Council Resource Manual

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association

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Alberta School Council Resource Manual.

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This resource is primarily intended for:

Parents	✓
Administrators	✓
Teachers	✓
Trustees	✓
General Public	✓

A PDF version of this resource is available at
<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/schoolcouncils.asp>

Print copies of this resource can be purchased from the Learning Resources Centre. Order online at www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca/ or telephone 780-427-2767. The product number is 644030.

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Message from Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Minister of Education, and from Trina Boymook, President of Alberta Home and School Councils' Association

We are pleased to provide you with this new *Alberta School Council Resource Manual*, which provides information on the operation of school councils and on key topics of importance to school councils and other education stakeholders. It is a comprehensive tool that will facilitate school council effectiveness which, in turn, will support school improvement.

Parents are vital to the continued strength of our education system and their involvement plays an important role in student success. Through involvement in school councils parents have an opportunity to influence the delivery and outcomes of school programs.

Alberta Education supported the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association in the development of this manual. It is endorsed by all education stakeholder associations: the College of Alberta School Superintendents; the Alberta Teachers' Association; the Alberta School Boards Association; the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta; and, the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia. We hope this manual assists you with the important work of school councils in Alberta.



Gene Zwozdesky
Minister of Education
Government House Leader
September 2006



Trina Boymook
President
Alberta Home and School
Councils' Association

Acknowledgements

The *Alberta School Council Resource Manual* was developed by the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association in collaboration with Alberta Education.

The following partners provided advice and support for the development of the *Alberta School Council Resource Manual*:

- Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
- Alberta School Boards Association
- Alberta Teachers' Association
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- College of Alberta School Superintendents

The effort of school councils throughout the province of Alberta that field tested the manual and provided insightful critique is also recognized.

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The Alberta School Council Resource Manual

Key Stakeholders and Partners

This manual has been prepared with the collaboration of the following stakeholders and partners:

Alberta School Boards Association	www.asba.ab.ca
Alberta Teachers' Association	www.teachers.ab.ca
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta	www.asboa.ab.ca
College of Alberta School Superintendents	www.cass.ab.ca
Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia	www.arpdc.ab.ca
Alberta Education	www.education.gov.ab.ca
Alberta Home and School Councils' Association	www.ahsca.ab.ca

Document Structure

This manual is divided into sections that address various topics relevant to school council development and operation.

Section 1: Relevant Legislation

- legislation that provides the legal framework for school councils

Section 2: School Council Operations and Information

- overview of how school councils operate
- important information

Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities

- descriptions of the various participants in a school council and their roles

Section 4: Recruiting and Retaining School Council Members

- guidance for recruiting new members and keeping current school council members engaged

Section 5: School Council's Role in School-based Planning

- guidance for school council's role in school-based planning

Section 6: School Councils and Fundraising Societies

- description of the school council's role in school fundraising
- differences between school councils and fundraising societies

Section 7: Appendices

- information sheets and planners related to the content in sections 1 through 6
- glossary and references

School Councils in Alberta

School councils are collective associations of parents, teachers, secondary students, principals, staff and community representative(s) who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning. They provide one means for members of the school community to provide advice and consult with the principal and to advise the board or the charter board.

School councils were created in 1995 and established under the *School Act*. School councils are mandatory for all schools in the public education system, including charter schools. Through school councils, Albertans assume an advisory role in local education matters that range from academic programs to school policies and budgeting.

Alberta Education's *School-based Decision-making Policy*, updated January 2003, affirms the requirement for principals to "work with parents, teachers and members of the community to establish a school-based decision-making process to develop school policies and budgets as well as to establish the scope of the school program and extracurricular activities."

In 1998, the Minister's Forums on School Councils M.L.A. Working Group examined how well school councils were fulfilling their mandate. The final report from this forum provided recommendations on how to enhance the role of school councils. Subsequent to this report, Alberta's Commission on Learning identified the important contributions of school councils and made recommendations for improvements.

Alberta Education supported the reports' recommendations relating to school councils and is working collaboratively with a multi-stakeholder group that includes Alberta Home and School Councils' Association, Alberta School Boards Association, College of Alberta School Superintendents, Alberta Teachers' Association, Association of School Business Officials of Alberta and the Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia to implement them.

The Government of Alberta recognizes the right and responsibility of parents and the community to be involved in the education of their children. Parents, community members and school staff, through the vehicle of school councils, have a means of involvement in decisions that impact student learning.

Using this School Council Resource Manual

This comprehensive manual has been developed as a resource to help school council members effectively fulfill their role. It replaces the *School Council Resource Manual*, 1995 and the *School Councils' Handbook*, 1999. It can be read in its entirety or used in modular format to address individual needs or to find answers to specific questions. It is available online at <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/parents/scm.pdf>.

A Principal's Guide to Working Effectively with Your School Council, published by Alberta Learning in 2004, may be a helpful complementary resource. It is available at www.teachingquality.ab.ca/resources/PrGuide_SchCouncils.pdf

Additional resources for teachers and parents are available from the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association at www.ahsca.ab.ca or 1-800-661-3470, and the Alberta Teachers' Association at www.teachers.ab.ca or 1-800-232-7208.

Introduction: Legislation



Included in this section:

- *School Act* – Section 22
- *School Councils Regulation* AR 113/2007
- Policy 1.8.2 – School-based Decision Making

Section 1

School Act –
Section 22

Section 1

*School Councils
Regulation*

Section 1

Policy - *School-
based Decision
Making*

Relevant Legislation

Several legislative documents have been included in this section. It is important to note that the *School Act* should be read in conjunction with the *School Councils Regulation*. The legal foundation for the regulation comes from the School Act. It must also be noted that these documents may change as legislation changes. The most current versions of these documents can be found at the links below.

School Act can be viewed and purchased from The Queen's Printer by opening the link available at: <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/toc.asp>.

School Councils Regulation can be purchased from The Queen's Printer by opening the link available at:

Appendix P
Privacy Legislation

Appendix Q
Personal
Information
Protection Act -
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)

<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/EducationGuide/pol-plan/polregs/UpdateSummary.asp>.

Policy 1.8.2 – School-based Decision Making is available at:
<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/182.asp>.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Guidelines and Practices is available at:
http://www3.gov.ab.ca/foip/guidelines_practices/index.cfm.

Personal Information Protection Act is available at:
<http://www.psp.gov.ab.ca/>.

School Act – Section 22

Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000

Chapter S-3

Current as of October 1, 2005

School council

- 22 (1)** A school council shall be established in accordance with the regulations for each school operated by a board.
- (2)** The majority of the members of a school council shall be parents of students enrolled in the school.
- (3)** A board of a separate school district or a division made up only of separate school districts, by resolution, may require that the parents of students enrolled in a school operated by the board who are members of the school council must also be of the same faith as those who established the separate school districts, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic.
- (4)** A school council may, at its discretion,
- (a)** advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school,
 - (b)** perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board in accordance with the delegation,
 - (c)** consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister,
 - (d)** consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the board and the superintendent, and
 - (e)** do anything it is authorized under the regulations to do.
- (5)** Subject to the regulations, a school council may make and implement policies in the school that the council considers necessary to carry out its functions.
- (6)** A school council may make bylaws governing its meetings and the conduct of its affairs.
- (7)** Subject to the regulations, a board may develop and implement policies respecting school councils.
- (8)** A board shall establish an appeal process or conflict resolution procedure under which the principal or the school council may apply respecting disputes on policies proposed or adopted for a school.
- (9)** The Minister, on the request of the board, may dissolve a school council without notice at any time if the Minister is of the opinion that the school council is not carrying out its responsibilities in accordance with this Act and the regulations.
- (10)** The Minister may make regulations

- (a) respecting the election or appointment of the members of a school council and the term or other conditions of election or appointment and the dissolution of a school council;
- (b) respecting the roles of the principal and the school council of a school and their respective powers, duties and responsibilities;
- (c) respecting any other matter the Minister considers necessary respecting school councils;
- (d) exempting a school or class of schools from the application of this section.

1988 cS-3.1 s17;1990 c36 s6;1994 c29 s8;1995 c27 s3

School Councils Regulation

Alberta Regulation 113/2007

School Act

SCHOOL COUNCILS REGULATION

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Definitions

In this Regulation,

- (a) "Act" means the *School Act*;
- (b) "board" has the meaning given to it in the Act;
- (c) "establishment meeting" means a meeting to be held under section 2 to establish a school council;
- (d) "executive" means the executive of a school council;
- (e) "model of governance" means the process and structure used by a school council to make decisions regarding its business and affairs;

- (f) “school community” in respect of a school means
 - (i) students enrolled in the school and their parents,
 - (ii) children enrolled in an Early Childhood Services program at the school and their parents,
 - (iii) the school staff, and
 - (iv) other persons who have an interest in the school;
- (g) “school day” means a day scheduled for the purpose of instruction, examinations or other student activities where student-teacher interaction and supervision are maintained.

School council must be established

- 2** If a school that is required to have a school council has no school council, the school must, in accordance with section 3, hold an establishment meeting within 40 school days after the start of the school year.

Notice of establishment meeting

- 3(1)** If a school is required to hold an establishment meeting, the principal must give notice to the following persons of the meeting:
- (a) a parent of each student enrolled in the school;
 - (b) a parent of each child enrolled in an Early Childhood Services program at the school;
 - (c) the school staff;
 - (d) other members of the school community who, in the principal’s opinion, should be given notice.
- (2)** A notice under subsection (1) must
- (a) describe the purpose of the meeting,
 - (b) set out the time, date and location of the meeting, and
 - (c) be given at least 10 school days before the date of the meeting.

- (3)** A notice to persons referred to in subsection (1)(d) must
- (a) meet the requirements set out in subsection (2), and
 - (b) either
 - (i) be posted in 2 or more locations that are accessible to the public in the area around the school, or
 - (ii) be advertised in a publication that is circulated to the general public in the area around the school.

Principal may establish advisory committee

- 4** If there are fewer than 5 parents in attendance at an establishment meeting or if an establishment meeting is not successful in establishing a school council, the principal may establish an advisory committee for that year to carry out one or more of the duties or functions of a school council.

Chair and secretary at establishment meeting

- 5** The principal must decide who is to act as the chair and who is to act as the secretary at an establishment meeting.

Agenda at establishment meeting

- 6(1)** The persons attending an establishment meeting must
- (a) decide, subject to section 8, on the size of the school council,
 - (b) decide on the model of governance for the school council,
 - (c) decide, subject to subsection (2), on the term of office of each member of the school council,
 - (d) elect, subject to subsection (2), the initial members of the school council referred to in section 8(1)(d),
 - (e) decide, subject to section 9, on the size of the executive,
 - (f) decide on the term of office of each member of the executive, and
 - (g) elect the initial members of the executive.
- (2)** For greater certainty, but without restricting the generality of subsection (1)(a), the persons attending an establishment meeting may decide that for the purposes of section 8(1)(d), the school council may include all parents of students enrolled in the school who wish to be members.

Right to vote at establishment meeting

- 7** Despite section 6, only persons who attend the establishment meeting and are
- (a) parents of students enrolled in the school, or
 - (b) parents of children enrolled in an Early Childhood Services program at the school are entitled to vote on matters raised at the meeting.

School council membership

- 8(1)** A school council must include the following members:
- (a) the principal of the school;
 - (b) at least one person who is a teacher at the school, elected or appointed by the teachers at the school;
 - (c) if the school includes a senior high school program, at least one person who is a student enrolled in the high school, elected or appointed by the students enrolled in the high school;
 - (d) subject to section 22(2) of the Act, parents of students enrolled in the school.
- (2)** The members of a school council referred to in subsection (1) may establish a process to appoint as members of the school council one or more persons who are not parents of students enrolled in the school but who have an interest in the school.
- (3)** The members of a school council referred to in subsection (1) may establish a process to appoint or elect as members of the school council one or more persons who are parents of children enrolled in an Early Childhood Services program at the school.

School council executive

- 9(1)** A school council must have a chair and any other members of the executive determined by the persons attending an establishment meeting.
- (2)** A parent of a student enrolled in the school must be elected chair of the executive.
- (3)** Despite subsection (2), a member who is not a parent may be elected chair of the executive if no parent is willing to be nominated as chair.
- (4)** Subject to subsection (2), every member of a school council is eligible to be elected as a member of the executive.

Faith of school council members

- 10** Unless a resolution has been passed under section 22(3) of the Act, the members of a school council may be of any faith

Remuneration of school council members

11 No member of a school council shall receive any remuneration for acting as a member of the council.

Prohibition against incorporation

12 No school council shall incorporate under the *Societies Act* or Part 9 of the *Companies Act*.

Responsibilities of board

13(1) A board must provide the school council with an opportunity to provide advice on the development of the school's

- (a) mission, vision and philosophy,
 - (b) policies,
 - (c) annual education plan,
 - (d) annual results report, and
 - (e) budget.
- (2) A board must provide the school council with the school's provincial testing program results and other provincial measures and a reasonable interpretation of those results and measures.
- (3) A board must at all reasonable times allow the school council free and full access to timely and accurate information of the board that is publicly available, including board policies and minutes of board meetings.

Duty to report to the board

14(1) The chair of a school council must prepare and provide to the board by September 30 of each year a report

- (a) summarizing the activities of the school council in the previous school year, and
 - (b) including a financial statement relating to money handled by the school council in the previous school year, if any, and how the funds were used.
- (2) A school council must retain at the school a copy of the minutes for each meeting of the school Council and make them available to the board or the public on request.
- (3) School council must retain the minutes for each meeting of the school council for at least 7 years.

Date for first meeting of school council

15 For any school year, the first meeting of the school council must be held within 20 school days after the start of the school year or as specified in the bylaws of the school council.

Suspension of school council

- 16(1)** If a quorum is not available for a meeting of a school council and the meeting has been re-scheduled on 2 or more occasions, the board may suspend the operation of the school council until the following year.
- (2) If the operation of a school council is suspended, the principal may establish an advisory committee to carry out one or more of the duties or functions of the school council until a new school council is established under subsection (3).
- (3) If the operation of a school council is suspended under subsection (1), a new school council must be established within 40 school days after the start of the next school year in accordance with sections 2 to 9.

Bylaws of school council

- 17(1)** Each school council may make bylaws respecting the conduct of its business and affairs including, without limitation, bylaws
- (a) respecting the calling of regular, special or annual meetings of the school council;
 - (b) subject to section 6, respecting the election of members of the school council;
 - (c) subject to section 6, respecting the election of members of the executive;
 - (d) respecting the role of the chair and other members of the executive relating to the conduct of the school council's affairs;
 - (e) respecting the number of times the school council must meet each year;
 - (f) respecting the location of school council meetings;
 - (g) respecting the number of school council members that constitutes a quorum at meetings of the school council;
 - (h) respecting a conflict resolution process for internal school council disputes.
- (2) A Bylaw under subsection (1) does not come into force unless it is approved by a majority of
- (a) parents of students enrolled in the school, and
 - (b) parents of children enrolled in an Early Childhood Services program at the school who vote at a special meeting of the school council called for that purpose.

- (3)** The bylaws continue in force from year to year unless
- (a) they are amended at a special meeting of the school council called for that purpose, and
 - (b) the amendment is approved in accordance with subsection (2).

Fees prohibited

- 18** No school council shall be charged a fee for the use of the school or school facilities for the purpose of holding a meeting of the school council.

Exemptions

- 19** The following are exempt from the application of section 22 of the Act and this Regulation:
- (a) a school for resident students of the Government as described in section 44(7) of the Act that is provided in an institution approved by the Minister;
 - (b) a school for students that is provided in an institution approved by the Minister.

Repeal

- 20** The *School Councils Regulation* (AR 171/98) is repealed.

Expiry

- 21** For the purpose of ensuring that this Regulation is reviewed for ongoing relevancy and necessity, with the option that it may be repassed in its present or amended from following a review, this Regulation expires on June 30, 2017.

Coming into force

- 22** This Regulation comes into force on July 1, 2007

Policy 1.8.2 – School-Based Decision Making

The updated version of Policy 1.8.2 can be found on Alberta Education's Website in K-12 Learning System **Policy Regulation and Forms Manual**

As of November 2005

Policy 1.8.2 – School-based Decision Making is available at:
<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/pol-plan/polregs/182.asp>

BACKGROUND

Alberta Education believes that major decisions about policies, instructional programs and services and the allocation of funds to support them must be made collaboratively. School-based decision making should involve collaboration between the principal, superintendent, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, and the community in keeping with the policies of the board of trustees. School-based decision making enables schools to be responsive to local needs.

Under section 20 of the *School Act*, and the direction set by the *Three-Year Business Plan*, the principal is the key educational leader at the school level, who will provide leadership in successful school-based decision making. Principals must work with parents, teachers and members of the community to establish a school-based decision making process to develop school policies and budgets as well as establish the scope of the school program and extra-curricular activities. Establishing an integral relationship among teaching, learning and the decision-making process should result in higher levels of student performance.

Alberta Education supports excellence in teaching and learning and the involvement of parents and the community in the education of students.

POLICY

A school and its community shall have the authority and the support to make decisions which directly impact on the education of students and shall be accountable for the results.

STATUTE

School Act

Principals

20 A principal of a school must

- (a) provide instructional leadership in the school;
- (b) ensure that the instruction provided by the teachers employed in the school is consistent with the courses of study and education programs prescribed, approved or authorized pursuant to this **Act**;
- (c) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs offered in the school; (c.1) ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
- (d) direct the management of the school
- (e) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the board;
- (f) promote co-operation between the school and the community that it serves;
- (g) supervise the evaluation and advancement of students;
- (h) evaluate the teachers employed in the school;
- (i) subject to any applicable collective agreement and the principal's contract of employment, carry out those duties that are assigned to

the principal by the board in accordance with the regulations and the requirements of the school council and the board.

School council

- 22 (4) A school council may, at its discretion,
- (a) advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school,
 - (b) perform any duty or function delegated to it by the board in accordance with the delegation,
 - (c) consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister,
 - (d) consult with the principal so that the principal may ensure that the fiscal management of the school is in accordance with the requirements of the board and the superintendent, and
 - (e) do anything it is authorized under the regulations to do.

REGULATIONS

The *School Councils Regulation* A.R. 171/2007 must be referred to in conjunction with this policy. See [Section 5, School Act](#) Regulations, in K-12 Learning System Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual.

ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

1. "school-based decision making" involves the whole school community in teaching and learning in order to ensure high levels of student achievement. School-based decision making is a process through which major decisions are made at the school level about policies, instructional programs and services, and how funds are allocated to support them; and
2. "community" means a school's students, their parents and other community-based support elements available to the school.

PROCEDURES

1. Each school board shall develop, keep current, and implement written policy and procedures for school-based decision making consistent with provincial policy and procedures. These shall be a matter of public record, available upon request.
2. School board policy and procedures for school-based decision making shall:
 - (1) be applicable to all schools in the jurisdiction but provide for the flexible approaches of school-based decision making;
 - (2) focus on teaching and learning;
 - (3) encourage input from all staff, parents and the community into school-based decisions on programs, instructional services, extra-curricular activities and the allocation of funds to support them;
 - (4) include goals, objectives and expected outcomes for school-based decision making;
 - (5) identify the types of decisions expected to be made at the school level;

- (6) ensure through established criteria for funding an equitable allocation of funds which respects differences in school populations;
 - (7) define the roles, responsibilities and relationships with a focus on broad distribution of power and authority for decision-making among all participants: principal, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, school councils, the community, central office and the board of trustees;
 - (8) provide for a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the school-based decision making process in place in its schools;
 - (9) define procedures for widespread communication and information sharing among stakeholders, including: appropriate involvement in school-based planning, evaluating and reporting processes;
 - (10) include guidelines for in-service and professional development opportunities for staff and school council members to facilitate changes in roles and responsibilities including: problem solving, management, and communication skills of all stakeholders;
 - (11) be consistent with *School Councils* ([Policy 1.8.3](#)) and regulations and
 - (12) be consistent with *Services for Students and Children* ([Policy 1.8.1](#)).
3. A school board, with staff and school council members, should develop an in-service and professional development plan to support implementation of school-based decision making. This plan may be developed in collaboration with the regional professional development consortium.

REFERENCES

Please refer to the current editions of the following for additional information:
Guide for School Board Planning and Results Reporting
Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper
School Authority Accountability ([Policy 2.1.1](#))
School Councils ([Policy 1.8.3](#))
Services for Students and Children ([Policy 1.8.1](#))
Three-Year Business Plan
Use and Reporting of Results on Provincial Assessment ([Policy 2.1.3](#))

See [Section 7](#) of the K-12 Learning System Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual for information on where the above document(s) may be obtained, and for Department / Branch addresses, phone and fax numbers

Introduction: Operations and Information



Included in this section:

- Establishment Meeting
- First School Council Meeting of the Year
- School Council Committees
- Communicating: Listening and Informing
- Code of Ethics, Guiding Principles and Dealing with Conflict
- Fundraising and Accounting Procedures
- Insurance and Liability Questions

Establishment Meeting

Section 1 School Councils Regulation

In schools where there is no school council, the principal arranges an establishment meeting, following the process outlined in the *School Councils Regulation*. The regulation identifies who the principal must notify, when the notification must occur, who is to act as the chair and who is to act as the secretary. The agenda for the establishment meeting should include discussion about the:

- school council membership
- size of the school council and the executive positions
- term of office of each member of the school council
- model of governance to be followed
- preferred decision-making model, including who is able to vote
- frequency of school council meetings
- by-laws or operating procedures
- any other matters that require clarification
- election of executive members of the school council.

Models of Governance/Operational Style

School councils may choose the model of governance that will work best for their communities. Two common models are the representative model and the assembly/town hall model.

A representative model is, in effect, when the school council acts like a board of directors to conduct the day-to-day business and reports back to the wider school community two or more times a year.

In an assembly/town hall model, most decisions are made at regular, open meetings of the entire school community and the executive members of the school council act only to carry out the wishes of the assembly.

If a school had a school council the previous year, the school council is renewed at the beginning of the next school year, as per the *School Councils Regulation*.

First School Council Meeting of the Year

Appendix A
Sample Agendas

Appendix J
Checklist for
School Council
Meetings

Appendix P
Privacy Legislation

The agenda for the first meeting should review the relevant legislation, allow discussion of the work of school council and help set the focus for the coming year. Normally, the agenda is set through collaborative efforts between the principal and chairperson.

Suggested topics for the first meeting include:

- review of the legislation, by-laws or operating procedures
- designation of a privacy officer
- roles and responsibilities of school councils, principals, teachers and school board (see Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities)
- mission, vision and code of ethics for school council or school
- school council's previous year's report to the school board
- rules of order that the school council will use throughout the year, including voting procedures
- schools and/or school council's three-year plan and activities (See Section 5: School Council's Role in School-based Planning)
- minutes of the last school council meeting and discussion about how to access the minutes from previous meetings
- potential school council committees and their responsibilities
- meeting dates and times for the year
- review of the governance model used in previous years, including how decisions are made.

Making Decisions about School Council Business

The way school councils make decisions may vary, depending on the issue. Two typical models for making decisions are consensus and majority vote. School councils may combine both strategies to seek consensus from the school community and then confirm the decision by a majority vote.

Making a decision by consensus requires that each decision maker agree to the final outcome but not necessarily all parts of it. School council members agree the total package best meets everyone's needs and supports it on that basis.

When making a decision by majority vote, it is necessary to provide ample time for school council members to become informed on the issue and to discuss it thoroughly. Majority vote is effective when it is not likely that a compromise will be reached. A drawback of this style of decision making is that it can create a win/lose situation.

Rules of Order

Rules of order help school councils operate effectively. School councils can establish rules of order, according to their culture and needs. Rules of order help formalize discussion, debate and decisions for the group. It is important that the school council follows a set of rules and that the chair knows the rules and adheres to them. There are official rules, such as

Robert's Rules of Order or simplified versions, such as those outlined below.

Simple Rules of Order

1. An individual must be recognized by the chair before obtaining the floor to make a motion.
2. Once an individual has the floor, he or she may make a formal proposal or motion, beginning with the statement, "I move ..."
3. Another individual must second the motion by saying, "I second the motion." This indicates that he or she agrees, in principle, and that the proposal should be discussed.
4. Once a motion is made and seconded, the chair states the motion so everyone is clear on what is being proposed. From this point until the motion has been voted on, all discussion focuses on the question.
5. After stating the motion, the chair asks if the assembly is ready for the motion or ready to vote on the proposal.
6. If no one indicates a desire to speak to the issue, the chair puts the motion or conducts the vote by asking for those in favour and those opposed. The vote may be conducted by a show of hands, by standing or by ballot.
7. If members of the group wish to discuss the motion, the chair opens debate. Each participant may speak to the motion twice. Once debate is complete, the chair puts the motion.
8. The majority needed to pass the motion should be stated in the school council operational procedures; e.g., 51%. In case of a tie, the motion is lost.

Appendix B Chairing the Meeting

Chairing the Meeting

It is expected that a parent will chair school council meetings. An effective chair or co-chairs will have an agenda that is focused on the business of the school council. The chair should start the meeting on time, encourage or allow opinions on each topic, sum up each discussion item with a view to closing the item and moving on, and end the meeting on time.

Appendix C Sample Minutes

Taking Minutes of the Meeting

Minutes are usually recorded by the secretary of the school council as per the regulation. The minutes should be consistently recorded in one of three ways:

- formal minutes - when the meeting is governed by a chair
- semiformal minutes - when a small group is conducting a relaxed discussion
- informal minutes - to record the generalities of a meeting.

Appendix P
Privacy Legislation

Appendix Q
*Personal
Information
Protection Act –
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)*

Accurate minutes provide school council members with:

- a clear objective summary of what went on during the meeting
- an historical account of the group's decisions and the rationale behind them, including:
 - objective comments, rather than opinions
 - decisions about action items
 - highlights, rather than narrative accounts
 - motions and resolutions recorded verbatim.

The minutes must be consistently recorded, in compliance with the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*, retained at the school and made available to the board and/or the public, on request.

Meeting Strategies – Dealing with the Unexpected

In its advisory role, a school council should have ample opportunity to develop a full range of ideas surrounding an issue. The chair is responsible for facilitating this process. Listed below are a number of techniques that can be used to help participants express their views:

1. Chair initiation

- The chair invites a wide range of people to speak.
- All who wish to speak are given the opportunity.
- Time limits can be put on each speaker, if necessary.

2. Pairing

- People are randomly paired to discuss an issue and report back to the group.

3. Table Go Round

- The chair invites each person to speak to an issue, if they choose.
- A time limit is placed on speakers.

4. Absolute Quiet

- Participants have time to think, read or make notes that relate to the issue being discussed.

5. Brainstorming

- The chair:
 - ensures everyone is clear on the issue
 - avoids judgemental statements
 - encourages and accepts every idea
 - modifies and combines ideas
 - allows participants to choose priorities.

6. Round Table

This process is similar to brainstorming, but the group is subdivided into groups of four to six people. Each group:

- uses flip charts to record ideas
- has a time limit
- records all ideas and reports back to the main group.

7. Pro/Con Analysis

- Participants focus only on the pros and cons of an issue.

School Council Committees

Members of school council cannot do everything themselves. Sometimes, it is necessary to delegate to a committee. Parents, teachers or members of the community who are unable to attend regular council meetings may be willing to serve on a short-term specific-task committee. Committees can enable a school council to accomplish more work in specific areas.

Appendix D Committee Formation and Operation

- Committees are formed after initial school council discussion.
- Items requiring more lengthy discussion or research are assigned to a committee.
- Committees make decisions or recommendations, according to the mandate the school council gives them.
- Committee members should:
 - be willing to participate, both individually and as a team
 - be willing to prepare reports for school council, as required
 - set priorities and follow them through
 - understand the expected time commitment
 - work towards consensus.

By-laws/operating procedures

Operating procedures are the guidelines that inform a school council of the expected way to conduct its business. Operating procedures should be aligned with government legislation and local school board policy. They typically outline things, such as:

Appendix E Building School Council - By- laws/operating procedures

- membership of the school council
- members of the executive of the school council; e.g. chair or co-chairs, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer
- duties of the officers; i.e., their role description
- types of committees that may be established
- meeting times and descriptions
- quorum necessary to make school council decisions
- decision-making style
- when the annual meeting will be held and who should attend
- annual report details, including when it is filed and the information it should contain
- methods to amend the by-laws/operating procedures
- which officers have signing authority
- processes to deal with conflict, should it arise.

Communicating: Listening and Informing

A school council is representative of parents and others from the broader school community. It is important that the school council identify ways and means to check the pulse of the school community and ensure the community's wishes, goals and aspirations for its school are articulated through the school council.

Section 3 Roles and Responsibilities

It is also important that the work of school council - its advice to the principal on school-based decisions, the strategies school council uses to enhance school climate and culture, and the ongoing support it gives the principal, staff and students in the school - is shared with the school community.

Open and clear communication is essential in helping everyone feel included as part of the school community.

School council can employ a variety of means to listen to and inform its community to the benefit of all.

Code of Ethics, Guiding Principles and Dealing with Conflict

If everyone adhered to a common code of ethics, there would never be any conflict of ideas or philosophies. However, differing views, opinions and ideas about the work of school council abound.

Having a code of ethics and some guiding principles for school council can dispel misunderstandings about why a school council exists, what it stands for and how it deals with issues.

Below is a suggested code of ethics the school council may wish to adopt. Regular reviews of the code help remind those on school council of appropriate behaviour, especially when faced with conflict.

Suggested Code of Ethics for School Council Members

All members shall:

- abide by the legislation that governs them
- be guided by the mission statement of the school and school council
- endeavour to be familiar with school policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them
- practise the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth
- recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community
- declare any conflict of interest
- encourage a positive atmosphere in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued
- apply democratic principles
- consider the best interests of all students

- respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school council
- do not disclose confidential information
- limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole
- use the appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise
- promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community
- accept accountability for decisions
- accept no payment for school council activities.

Guiding principles can also help school council members focus on their role in the school and the school community.

When those involved in discussion and decision making at a school embrace both a code of ethics and guiding principles that speak to collaboration, cooperation, continuous improvement and understanding, conflicts can be dealt with more effectively.

Fundraising and Accounting Procedures

A school council cannot be incorporated under the *Societies Act* or Part 9 of the *Companies Act*. Although a school council can fundraise, it cannot undertake fundraising endeavours that require a gaming license from the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, such as bingos, casinos or raffles.

Some school councils that choose to fundraise, have banking procedures with signing authority and maintain records on the use of fundraised dollars. Some school councils choose to fundraise and use the school's accounting procedures. Other school councils choose not to fundraise. While each school council may decide what is best for itself and the school community, it is recommended that school councils use the accounting procedures already established at the school and approved by the school board/charter board.

When the school's accounting procedures are not used, it is necessary to check with the school jurisdiction to determine its policies in relation to the recording and reporting of fundraised money.

Insurance and Liability Questions

Section 1 School Act – Section 60

School councils are covered under the school board's liability insurance. The *School Act* states that a board must maintain an insurance policy or policies that indemnify the board, its employees and school councils. A school council chair is encouraged to check with the superintendent or school board/charter board chairperson to ascertain the details of coverage. Limitations are identified in the policies.

Introduction: Role and Responsibilities



Included in this section:

- School Council as a Whole
- Roles
- Communication
- Summary: Roles and Responsibilities

School councils are an important forum through which members of school communities play key advisory roles in school improvement planning. While school councils were mandated in 1995 as a means to increase meaningful involvement by parents and community in school-based decisions, there is still much that can be done to enhance the role of school councils within our schools. This section is designed to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of school councils and to provide ideas to support respectful and cooperative interactions among education partners.

Effective Communication Practices

The key factor in collaborative relationships is open communication. It takes time and effort to build trust for meaningful, two-way communication.

Individual:

- Listening is an equal partner in communication. Talk less and listen more.
- Carefully examine the other person's viewpoint. See if you can effectively summarize the points.
- Observe nonverbal behaviours, such as body language, to grasp meanings beyond what is being said.
- Listen between the lines for implicit meanings as well as explicit ones. Do not interrupt.
- Speak affirmatively. Do not evaluate, critique or disagree while someone is expressing his or her point of view.
- Paraphrase at key points in the conversation to ensure your understanding.
- Speak clearly and only to the issue being discussed. Write your thoughts down to keep yourself focused.
- Consider using a talking circle for comfortable communication.

Within Councils:

- View every parent of a student in the school, as well as other members, as a participant.
- Provide an opportunity for every member to participate in school council meetings.
- Make the agenda flexible enough to allow all members to express ideas and opinions.
- Regularly check on how well the school council is meeting the needs of the community.
- Review school council policies regularly.

- Communicate with other school councils in your area, through your jurisdiction's established network, or across the province, through organizations, such as the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (www.ahsca.ab.ca) or the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (www.fpfa.ab.ca)

School Council as a Whole

School Council

School council is a collective association of parents, teachers, secondary students, principal, staff and community representative(s) whose purpose is to advise the principal and the board respecting matters relating to the school. It is a means for parents and community members to work together with the school to support and enhance student learning.

Section 1
School Act –
Section 22
&
School Councils
Regulation

Membership in the school council is defined in regulation and in the *School Act*. The majority of the members are parents of children enrolled at the school. Other members are the principal, one or more teacher representatives and a high school student, if the school has a high school. A school council may also have an Early Childhood Services (ECS) parent, if the school has an ECS program, and a community member.

A school council is a vehicle to support meaningful parental involvement in decisions that affect the school and its operations. School council provides the venue for parents to reflect the wishes of the broader community for the education of its students and to actively participate in giving advice and support to the principal in the operations of the school. The actual decision-making authority of the school council is limited to

- a) setting policies to govern school council activities at the school level, as described in the *School Act*,
- b) planning support activities that align with school council's purpose and
- c) choosing which advice to provide the principal and board on areas that specifically fall to them.

The Role of the School Council

A school council should review its mission, vision and goals annually to ensure it reflects the views of the current membership.

Section 5
School Council's
Role in School-
based Planning
and Results
Reporting

Other school council functions may include:

- consulting with the principal so he or she can ensure students have opportunities to meet Ministry standards, fiscal management is sound and the community's expectations are taken into consideration during school-based planning
- advising the principal and the school board/charter board
- being involved in school-based planning
- sharing ideas and information with other school councils and provincial organizations
- communicating information to the school community and other school councils
- setting policies that relate to school council functions, such as:

- location of school council meetings
- mailing address for school council correspondence
- school council orientation and development policy
- financial policy
- fundraising policy
- communications policy
- privacy policy
- minutes of school council meetings
- pertinent information unique to the school council.

What School Councils are Not

It is important to be mindful that, as with all partners in education, there are limits to the work that can be done by a school council. Roles that are not to be taken on by a school council include:

- school governance
- employment issues
- school management
- listening to complaints.

It is not the primary role of school councils to:

- fundraise
- lobby.

When everyone has a clear understanding of his or her role on school council, it fosters mutual respect and collaboration.

School Councils Must Avoid ...

- working on policies that deviate from school board policy
- taking on the role of the teacher, principal or school board, each of which has professional and legal responsibilities within the school system
- discussing performance or conduct of individual students, teachers, other employees, parents or community members during activities related to school council
- commenting on terms and conditions of individual employment contracts for school staff
- discussing matters clearly designated to another person or group through legislation.

Roles

Roles That Differ and Evolve

The school council is a legislated structure – a forum for parents and community members to participate, in an advisory capacity, in their local, school-based decision-making processes.

Legislation created school councils, but it cannot make them work. That is up to the members, including parents, staff, principals, school boards and,

in some cases, students. The experience of members, the leadership of the principal and chair and the goals of the group play a role in defining the discussions and the level of involvement of a school council. The means by which a school council defines its meaningful involvement is up to each school council.

There are different levels of involvement for school councils. It is suggested that school councils decide on their preferred level of involvement at the first school council meeting of the year.

Where Advising Meets Decision Making

The advisory role is intended to involve parents, high school students and the community in school-based decision making for which the principal is responsible.

It is always important to respect authority and legal accountability. The principal has authority for instructional leadership and school management and the school board/charter board has authority for governing the school jurisdiction.

School council also plays a decision-making role in its own operations by:

- deciding on which matters to advise
- creating operating procedures to carry out its functions, which may be in the form of by-laws/operating procedures
- developing operational policies in the school that are considered necessary to carry out its functions, with the support of the principal
- choosing goals, setting plans and organizing activities to support the school council's purpose
- deciding how to allocate undesignated school council funds.

Advising the Principal

School council may, at its discretion, advise the principal on any matter relating to the school.¹ Some of the more common topics for discussion include:

- school's overall mission, philosophy, policies, rules and goals
- school's improvement planning, including three-year plans
- school jurisdiction policies (e.g., school fees, school council policies)
- school budget
- school volunteers
- provincial achievement test results and diploma exam results
- guidelines and principles for the school resource allocations
- fundraising
- in-service and/or information needs of school council members
- school policy on use of facilities by the larger community
- facility renovations
- ways of reporting student achievement results to parents and public
- methods of communicating with the public
- promotion of the school in the community

¹ *School Act*

- programs offered in the school
- extracurricular activities offered in the school
- student attendance procedures, standards of student conduct and bullying issues
- services for students to help improve learning, such as assistance from reading specialists and guidance counsellors
- school calendar and adjustments in school hours
- Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects
- graduation and other school celebrations.

Advising the Board of Trustees and Charter Boards

School council may, at its discretion, advise the school board/charter board on any matter relating to the school. Typical topics include:

- jurisdiction's three-year plan
- school jurisdiction budget
- fundraising issues and methods of generating additional revenue
- school council policies
- jurisdiction-wide programming priorities
- school infrastructure priorities
- safety issues that affect students/schools in the jurisdiction
- advocacy for students, parents and public education
- transportation issues
- suggested criteria for hiring a school principal.

There are a number of ways to approach the board or charter board, including:

- Elect a representative to attend board meetings and report back to the school council.
- Invite your trustee or charter board member to attend all or specific meetings and present a report.
- Write letters to your trustee, charter board member or chairperson.
- Provide your trustee or charter board member with school council reports and/or minutes of meetings.

Advising the Minister of Education

School councils may also come together to advise the Minister of Education on matters that pertain to provincial educational policy and directions. When advice with the potential to affect change in schools across the province is given, it becomes advocacy. This form of advising or advocacy can be undertaken through a government recognized provincial association that represents the voice of parents in public education; e.g., the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA).

AHSCA members bring forward issues, in the form of resolutions, at an annual general meeting. If the resolution is endorsed or voted in by the majority of the assembly at the meeting, it becomes policy. This policy forms the basis for advocating change to the Minister of Education.

Appendix E
Building School
Council -
Bylaws/Operating
Procedures

Responsibilities

School council members are responsible for creating a culture of respect and collaboration, especially with respect to the roles of staff and volunteers, the skills, knowledge and time contributed by school council members and individual family structures and values.

Each school council must decide how to fulfill this responsibility in the school community through activities, such as:

- seeking the views of the school community (e.g., through questionnaires, informal discussions, topic-specific meetings)
- representing the views of the school community actively and accurately (e.g., through consulting as widely as possible with parents, teachers, students and community before making major decisions or providing conclusive advice to the principal or board)
- informing the school community of things, such as meetings, committee work, news and surveys (e.g., through newsletters, bulletin boards, e-mails)
- involving the school community (e.g., by inviting, supporting, including)
- encouraging and promoting parental involvement and support (e.g., by publicizing opportunities for ways to get involved, not just school council meetings)
- becoming well informed (e.g., by asking questions, reading, critically examining what is presented)
- focusing on the best interests of all students (e.g., by considering a wide variety of students and families when making decisions and formulating advice)
- becoming familiar with the policies of the local school board and understanding how they impact the school community
- maintaining high ethical standards and setting ground rules of respect for meetings (e.g., adopting a code of ethics for school council members).

Appendix L
School Council
Check-up

Appendix F
Sample School
Council Annual
Report

Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members

School Council Chair

It is expected that the school council chairperson will be a parent of a student attending the school. The chair should be someone who can work collaboratively and knows how to organize both programs and people. The chair should actively encourage others to become involved in meaningful ways.

Typical chairing duties include:

- calling regular school council meetings
- preparing agendas for school council meetings
- chairing and maintaining meeting decorum
- ensuring that minutes are recorded and maintained
- communicating with the principal on a regular basis
- ensuring there is regular communication with the school community, beyond those who attend meetings

- following existing school council by-laws/operating procedures
- ensuring roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- soliciting input from all members
- staying informed about school board policy that impacts school council
- striving to ensure the diversity of the school community is represented on school council
- promoting teamwork between the school council, principal and staff
- leading a school council self-evaluation (e.g., completing the annual report to the school board).

Chair's Relationship with the Principal

The chair's role is key to the success of the school council. One important responsibility is regular and ongoing communication with the school principal. This relationship of mutual trust and respect must be nurtured, being mindful of common goals for the learning community.

What Works!

Partnerships work.

Retired Calgary principal, Dick Wilkinson, said that he often worked with his school council to brainstorm ideas and exchange information about various initiatives and issues that arose at his elementary school.

"As the official parent voice of the learning community, I found that the school council was able to give advice and information that assisted us to make decisions."

When the staff was thinking about introducing student agendas, the parents were able to discuss the pros and cons of whether or not they thought agendas were a valuable learning tool for students. Mr. Wilkinson was able to bring this information back to the staff and it was eventually decided that agendas would be used in specific grades.

Vice-chair

On some school councils, the role of chair is shared, either through the creation of co-chairing positions or through the chair's dependence on the vice-chair to undertake part of the work.

Typically, the vice-chair's duties are to:

- chair meetings, in the event the chair is unavailable
- work with and support the chair in agenda preparation
- promote teamwork and assist the chair in the smooth running of the meetings
- keep informed of relevant school and school board policies
- prepare to assume the responsibility of chairperson in the future.

Secretary

The school council secretary typically will:

- act as a recorder at each meeting and ensure the minutes accurately reflect the directions agreed to at the school council meeting
- keep minutes, correspondence, records and other school council documents (e.g., constitution and operating procedures) filed in an orderly fashion and publicly accessible, in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act*
- have a working knowledge of the operating procedures of the school council
- ensure notice of meetings and other school council events is distributed.

Treasurer

If the school council is handling money, through fundraising activities or grants, the treasurer will:

- keep accurate records of all transactions
- report to the school council on the receipt and expenditure of funds
- ensure that records are available, upon request of the school board.

Principal

The principal is the instructional leader who manages the day-to-day operations of the school and is a key member on school council who promotes cooperation between the school and the community. The principal implements the policies of Alberta Education and the local school board, ensures instruction is consistent with the *Programs of Study*, ensures the standards of education are met, evaluates the programs, maintains order and discipline within the school, evaluates and supervises teachers and supervises the evaluation and advancement of students.

On school council, the principal:

- promotes cooperation between the school and the community it serves
- seeks input from parents and community on major decisions that affect the school
- establishes, facilitates, communicates and encourages opportunities for parent and community involvement in school matters
- encourages and supports the formation and continuous improvement of school council
- interprets and shares results of provincial achievement tests and diploma exams
- shares information about the school community
- provides information on the programs in the school and the needs of the students
- refers school council to the appropriate resource for information on laws, regulations and policies that affect school council
- provides an opportunity for the school council to provide input into the school's education plan.

Parents

Parents of children enrolled at the school form the majority of the members of school council. Parents are key members of school council who:

- operate with a philosophy that enhances the team approach to education and community development, viewing the school and the family as a working team
- share their professional knowledge, expertise and life experience with other school council members
- encourage feedback and participation from community groups and individuals
- keep current on community events
- communicate information of interest to the school council and the school community
- share information from school council meetings with the community
- have a clear understanding of the school council's goals
- maintain flexibility while planning to achieve goals
- respect confidentiality
- contact other school councils for support and information
- attend school council meetings
- identify topics for agendas
- work toward building a positive consensus within the school environment
- make recommendations for and attend training sessions on school council effectiveness
- create an inviting school council environment.

Teacher(s)

Each school council must have at least one teacher representative. The teacher on school council:

- promotes a collaborative, collegial model of decision making at the school and for the school council
- provides support for the decisions of the school council
- shares professional knowledge with other school council members
- encourages parents and community members to become involved in school activities
- shares school council activities and information with other staff, parents and community members
- follows the code of ethics and professional protocols set out by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
- represents the teachers' perspective.

Community Member

School councils are encouraged to have a community member attend meetings. The community representative can play a strong role in bringing the community perspective into the school. The member helps the school and school council build partnerships with the larger community and, in many instances, acts as a resource to promote cooperative ventures between community and school to enhance student learning.

Student

The student is the centre of the education system and, in high school, has an important role to play as a participant on school council. A student:

- presents the student perspective on issues
- helps design school policies
- seeks other students' views to share with school council
- communicates school council's information to fellow students.

Roles and Responsibilities Beyond School Council

Superintendent and Superintendent of a Charter Board

The superintendent, as the chief executive and educational officer of the board/charter board, is responsible to the board/charter board and to the Minister of Education for the overall achievement and success of the students within the jurisdiction or charter school.

As such, the superintendent:

- plays a key role in establishing accountability measures for the jurisdiction or charter board
- upholds the *School Act*, *School Councils Regulation* and related policies
- implements policies regarding the operation of school councils and plays an instrumental role in assisting with their formation and operation.

School Boards and Charter Boards

The school board consists of elected community members (i.e., trustees) who determine policy and set goals and directions to guide education in the school jurisdiction. A charter board consists of members that are appointed to the board. The board member can bring the board's perspective and information, as an invited guest, at school council meetings.

The school board or charter board:

- determines the vision and overall priorities of educational programs the community/charter community needs and wants and endeavours to provide such programs
- makes and implements policies respecting school councils, subject to the *School Councils Regulation*
- provides a school council with an opportunity to offer advice on the development of the school's mission, vision, philosophy, policies, annual education plan, annual results report and budget
- provides the school council with the school's provincial testing program results and other provincial measures and a reasonable interpretation of those results and measures
- allows school council, at reasonable times, free and full access to timely and accurate information of the board that is publicly available, including board policies and minutes of board meetings
- may appoint a member to attend school council meetings

Section 1

*School Councils
Regulation*

Section 1

*School Act –
Section 22, 60*

- establishes an appeal process or conflict resolution procedure to help school council with disputes on policies proposed or adopted by the school, in accordance with the *School Act*
- ensures that school council liability insurance is in place, in accordance with the *School Act*
- hires and evaluates the superintendent.

“As a trustee, I would like to be invited to school council meetings and have a regular place on the agenda to report what the board is accomplishing and our goals. Also, it would give me a place to hear what our learning community is thinking about with regard to educational matters so I could bring that back to the board meetings.”

Patricia Aitchison, Trustee
Lethbridge School Division

Section 1
School Act –
Section 22

Section 1
School Councils
Regulation

Minister of Education

The Minister of Education determines the general direction for education policy and is responsible for legislation governing the formation of school councils. In addition to the Province of Alberta’s *School Act*, the Minister provides:

- *School Councils Regulation*
- Other regulations, policies, Ministerial Orders and guides.

The Minister also provides periodic review of existing legislation.

Communication

Appendix P
Private Legislation

Appendix Q
Personal
Information
Protection Act –
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)

One of the keys to an effective school council is the ability of the members to communicate well with each other. A responsibility of a school council is to communicate with the parents of a school community. There are several ways to communicate the work of the school council. Outlined below are some tips and suggestions that may prove useful.

Within Council

- At the first school council meeting, ask the participants for phone numbers, addresses and e-mail addresses, and inform them about how information will be used and with whom it will be shared. Distribute the contact list to other key people (subject to the *Personal Information Protection Act*).
- Research and develop a list of relevant and interesting Web site addresses, companies and organizations for distribution to school council members.
- Ask if the school Web site could provide a link to the e-mail address of the chair/co-chairs of the school council. Check regularly for messages. Since chairs change from year to year, it is recommended that the e-mail address be generic rather than an individual’s name; e.g., chair@yourschoolname.ca.

- Network and communicate with other school councils, through a school council umbrella group, or provincially, through Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA) or the Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta (FPFA).

In the School Community

- Include highlights of school council meetings in the school newsletter.
- Send school council bulletins (e.g., meeting notices, other important dates) home with students on a regular basis.
- Ask the local newspaper to run an article about your school council.
- Ask a local ethnic newspaper to translate and run an article about your school council.
- Include and maintain a section for school council news on your Web site.
- Seek networking opportunities within your community – make a presentation to town council or to service clubs about the work of the school council.
- Keep the lines of communication open between your school council and your school board; e.g., invite your local trustee to your meetings or attend a school board meeting.
- Seek opportunities to translate school newsletters and other forms of communication into the languages used by parents.

Effective communication by school council builds support for the success of its goals. It demonstrates that parents and school council are serious about the school, children's learning and involvement as key partners in helping create a successful learning environment for students.

Summary: Roles and Responsibilities



Roles and Responsibilities	
School Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation of parents and representatives from the school community. • Act as a link between the school council, parents and the community. • Act in the best interest of the school and students. • Ensure the executive positions of the school council are filled. • Maintain high ethical standards. • Understand the policies of the local school board.
School Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises the principal and board/charter board on educational issues that pertain to the school. • Establishes and reviews school council's goals, objectives, action plans and procedures. • Communicates and consults with parents and the school community. • Meets regularly.
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees the operation and management of the school. • Establishes a school council. • Provides school council with opportunities for input on educational issues and shares recommendations with the board. • Promotes cooperation between the community and the school. • Provides policy and regulation information to school council. • Advises school council on actions taken in response to school council recommendations. • Interprets and reports results of provincial achievement tests and diploma exams.
Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as chief executive and education officer of the school board. • Establishes accountability measures for the jurisdiction. • Upholds the <i>School Act</i>, <i>School Council Regulation</i> and related policies. • Implements policies regarding the operation of school councils and assists with their formation and operation.
School Board Charter Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to the community on student achievement and the performance of the school system, including an interpretation of the results. • Provides educational programs, based on community needs. • Hires and evaluates the superintendent. • Provides school council liability insurance. • Enables meaningful school council input into decisions about education. • Creates appeal and conflict resolution procedures to assist school council. • Supports the work of school council. • Provides accurate and timely information.
Minister of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has responsibility for education legislation. • Sets funding levels for education. • Sets general direction for education policy. • Sets guidelines for curriculum and student assessment. • Reports annually about education in the province.

Introduction: Recruiting and Retaining



Included in this section:

- Recruiting Members
- Retaining Members
- Summary: Recruiting and Retaining School Council Members

School councils are forums through which members of school communities play important roles in school improvement planning. It is important that school councils make an effort to reflect the diversity within the school community.

Recruiting Members

Why Become Involved?

Educators recognize the crucial role that school councils, parents and community members have in enhancing student learning. Studies identify the benefits of parental involvement in education, which include:

- higher student achievement
- better student attendance
- more positive student attitudes and behaviours
- higher student graduation rates.

When to Recruit

Effective recruiting needs to be an ongoing, year-round activity. As with any volunteer group, it is important to support the participation of existing volunteers and to invite newcomers to ensure continued success into the future. Having skilled and committed school council leaders assume key organizing and chairing roles also enhances the success and sustainability of a school council.

What works!

Every Parent Cares

"The biggest challenge was to get parents to attend the first meeting," said retired principal Dick Wilkinson, "so I put out a challenge to my staff. During parent teacher interviews, I asked that they find one parent who would come to the meetings to represent their classroom."

Attendance rose from an average of 8 to 10 parents to over 20!

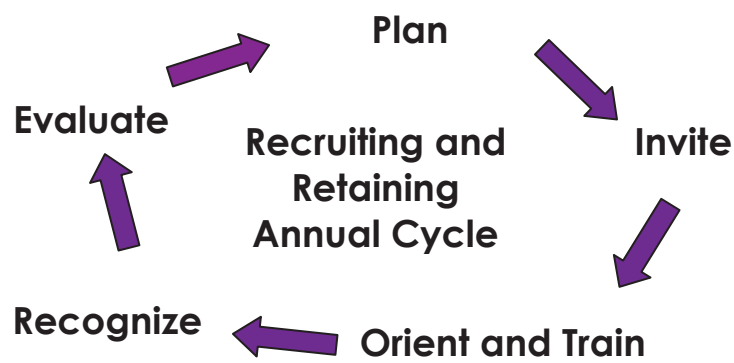
Appendix G
The Recruitment
Committee

How to Recruit

Recruitment is about approaching those who may have an interest in school council and matching their skills with the work that needs to be

done. To find a good match, it helps to ask questions before recruiting begins, for example:

- What qualities or skills are required on your school council? Who has these skills?
- What does your school council need to get a particular job done successfully?
- What orientation, support and training will be provided to potential members?
- What would motivate a potential volunteer to want to be part of the school council team?
- What Aboriginal or other cultural associations could be contacted to assist?
- How and where can you communicate with them?



Everyone should be encouraged to identify opportunities to involve school community members in the school-based decision-making process on school council. Parents, teachers, students, administrators, community leaders and trustees know people who can make positive school council contributions.

"I couldn't volunteer during the day so I felt attending school council was one way I could gain an understanding of what was going on within the school."

Dad, seven years with school councils

No single recruitment method will work best in every situation. It is important to develop and use a variety of methods to encourage involvement on school council.

- Advertise on school signs, through the newsletter, with posters in public places or on the school's Web site.
- Post meeting agendas and information about the activities of school council on Web sites and in the school newsletter.
- Have a school council presence at community events, spreading the word about the important work of the school council.

- Have some school council members present at school events, such as meet the teacher night, open house and school fairs to highlight school council activities.
- Take advantage of reaching out to new parents when they come to the school – make a presentation at kindergarten registration or provide welcome packages for new-to-the-school parents.
- Reach out to community members who may not normally be involved at the local school: religious leaders, political leaders, media representatives, retired people, elders from the First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups and alumni.
- Individual contact, face-to-face or on the phone, sends a message that you are serious about wanting that person on school council.
- Challenge each school council member to bring a friend to the next meeting.
- Place an advertisement in local community papers, including newspapers for Aboriginal and other cultural groups.

An option for recruiting in a more formal and ongoing way is to establish a school council recruiting committee.

How to Get a “Yes”

Once potential school council members have been identified and contacted, how do you get them to agree to participate?

There are many reasons why people say yes to volunteering. Often, it's the fact that they have been invited to participate. School council meetings are an excellent opportunity for people to see the impact they can make in their school community. There are many approaches that can be used to get people to attend a school council meeting as a first step to becoming involved.

- Be clear about why you are asking for participation on school council.
- Refer to the goals of your school and school council.
- Link the accomplishment of specific goals to the skills and/or expertise the potential member can bring to the school council.
- Mention special projects school council will be undertaking and ask for short term assistance in a specific area.
- Mention committees and link work to the potential school council member's skills and attributes (e.g., school improvement planning, budget, fundraising, sports, library, technology, special events, policy input, fitness centre development).
- Let the potential member know that there may be opportunities for training and in-service in areas of specific interest.
- Let the potential member know school council would benefit greatly from his or her contributions.

"I was on two committees when my kids were in a large high school. I didn't have extended periods of time, so this was a way I could make an impact on public education ... Although I was happy when the kids graduated, now, after 10 years, if I were asked, I would probably go back and volunteer."

Mother, 14 years school council involvement

Appendix O

Sample Contact
Permission Form

Appendix P

Privacy Legislation

Appendix Q

*Personal
Information
Protection Act –
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)*

Section 5:

School Council's
Role in School-
based Planning
and Results
Reporting

Appendix H

Sample Welcome
Letter

Communication

Communication is the most useful tool to get people interested in the work of school council. Letting parents and community members know about school council meetings and sharing information about school council decisions, directions and activities helps keep them in the interest loop.

- Collect and maintain a database of parents' names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses, and inform everyone how this data will be used.
- Use e-mail to send meeting notices, event announcements, requests for help and updates on school issues.
- Use your school's outdoor sign to advertise and promote school council meetings and events.
- Ask local businesses if they will post school council meeting information and/or distribute the school council newsletter. Ask your local churches, seniors' facilities, daycares or community leagues to do the same.
- Send parents and others the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting several days before each school council meeting.
- Call people a few days before each meeting and encourage them to attend.
- Translate important notices and information into the main languages of the school, when possible.
- Create a school council newsletter.
- Make sure the community knows and understands the goals of the school and school council.
- Thank and recognize volunteer efforts often and publicly.

Retaining Members

Once new school council members have been recruited, efforts need to be made to keep them involved. Developing and implementing procedures to create an environment of inclusion and involvement is essential.

Orienting, mentoring and training new members promotes a sense of belonging that immediately involves them in the school council. Running productive meetings, recognizing volunteer commitment and succession planning for the future are ways to retain seasoned members.

Orientation

New members will not necessarily be familiar with how a school council works or the specific work of their school council. It is important to provide them with the resources they need to understand how everything comes together. Providing them with a welcome package of information will help. This package can contain information, such as:

- a welcome letter
- the *School Council Annual Report*, which should include a short description of what your school council does, its mission, purpose, goals and past financial statements
- past school newsletters

- a calendar of events
- a school council member contact sheet
- a copy of the school's and jurisdiction's three-year education plans – ask if there is a parent-friendly version available.

Mentoring

Often, a newcomer to a group feels at a loss – everyone seems to know all the ins and outs on topics, meeting format and issues. More importantly, they know each other. A mentoring program can help new school council members feel welcomed and important.

If there is someone new attending a school council meeting, think about asking a more experienced school council member to be a mentor.

A mentor can:

- phone ahead and advise the new members of the ongoing work of the school council, share resources and answer any questions the new person may have
- offer to accompany the new member to the meeting
- introduce the new member to the others informally before the meeting starts
- provide ongoing support and encouragement to take on new jobs and initiatives
- offer to help organize car pools for people who live far from the school.

Training and Development

School council members can sometimes get into a rut, doing the same things in the same ways. That's when members, new or experienced, start to feel they are no longer making meaningful contributions. Opportunities for learning, developing and improving, as a group or as individuals, will revitalize their enthusiasm.

Everyone on school council should be encouraged to watch for opportunities for learning. Together, discuss what the school council needs and decide what is most important.

- What new ventures are you embarking upon? What are the goals towards which you are striving? Is there an in-service, speaker or training opportunity that will meet your needs? Book training or in-service sessions when people are most likely to attend. If it is an evening session, try to keep it to a maximum of two hours, with a refreshment break.
- Plan activities and sessions that will build on the strengths or build new strengths of the school council. Ongoing training will serve to enhance members' capacities and confidence levels.
- Keep topics interesting and challenging.
- Don't forget lighter fare – humour or just plain fun often serves as a catalyst for revitalization, both individually and as a group.

- Evaluate each learning session as a group. What worked and what are suggestions for improvement? What more do you need on this topic?

Appendix I
Make Council
Meetings Positive
and Productive

Productive Meetings

One key way to make sure school council members feel positive about their role on school council is to have productive and effective school council meetings. There are five signs of an effective meeting.

1. The meeting has a purpose and an agenda. People know why they're there and what they're hoping to accomplish.
2. Members participate actively and the meetings are democratic. All participants feel they have the chance to be heard.
3. The members generate creative ideas and solutions.
4. Members are committed to the decisions and actions they reach.
5. Members are willing to work together again. Feeling positive about the meeting and maintaining mutual respect is important.

Appendix O
Sample Contact
Permission Form

Appendix P
Privacy Legislation

Appendix Q
*Personal
Information
Protection Act*
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)

Recognition

When people volunteer their time and energy, it is crucially important that they are recognized for their efforts and contributions. Sometimes, a simple thank you is what keeps people motivated and coming back – they know they are appreciated. There are many ways to informally thank school council members and volunteers; however, a formal recognition event is also a way to publicly honour volunteers. Other forms of recognition include:

- student performances for guest/guests of honour
- handwritten notes of thanks or a special phone call of thanks
- acknowledgment of accomplishments in school newsletters, on bulletin boards or at assemblies
- students' notes of thanks or thank you cards
- an annual event of celebration, such as a tea, luncheon or coffee party
- a scrapbook or photo album
- a wall of fame in the school
- names and thanks posted on the school Web site
- a smile and a thank you when you meet a school council member.

Forms of recognition must comply with the *Personal Information and Protection Act* (PIPA).

Succession Planning

A school council is a vibrant, dynamic organization with goals and objectives. It makes a real difference within the school community. The school council should be forward-looking and constantly seeking to improve opportunities for student success.

However, it can be a challenge for the school council to keep the dynamism going when the same dedicated people have been on school council for a number of years and are moving on. Their children may be nearing graduation or moving to another school. Some people may just be retiring after many years of school council work. How does the school council continue to thrive and grow?

Succession planning is something that people involved in an organization don't think about too often, yet it is a very important aspect of ensuring the continuation of school council.

Succession planning can include:

- identifying and nurturing leadership qualities in your school council members (i.e., Is there someone on your school council who is articulate, thoughtful and others look to for advice?)
- letting leadership candidates know of their qualities
- encouraging and coaching those with leadership potential to assume executive positions on school council
- finding opportunities to speak privately with individuals and encourage them to take leadership positions
- speaking often at school council meetings about the importance of school council's work (e.g., that school council has a positive influence in the success of the school)
- ongoing recruitment of school council members to ensure a pool of leaders from which to draw
- ensuring that all members of a school council understand how school councils run, know the roles and responsibilities of each executive position and have some ideal of commitment.

Summary: Recruiting and Retaining Members



Recruiting	Retaining
Why?	Why?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a high turnover in school council members. • New members bring new ideas and interest. • Parent involvement encourages student success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members stay actively involved in school council. • It provides the opportunity for succession training. • Having long term members provides continuity to the work of school council.
When?	When?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective recruiting needs to be an ongoing, year-round activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining needs to be a continuous, meaningful process.
How?	How?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about the needs of the school council. • Identify resources needed to recruit and train. • Identify opportunities to involve school community members in the school-based decision-making process on the school council. • Seek opportunities to invite and welcome members from diverse groups in the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement procedures to create an environment of inclusion and involvement. • Show appreciation to members.
What is the Work?	What is the Work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with the school community to get people interested in the work of the school council. • Invite school community members to participate in school council work. • Communicate with parents, through school resources, about school council work. • Create a school council plan that shows the goals of the school council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orient new members by providing the resources they need to understand the work of the school council. • Have mentors welcome and situate new members. • Provide training and development opportunities for school council members to revitalize their enthusiasm • Ensure meetings are productive and effective, with the opportunity for everyone to be involved. • Recognize the accomplishments, efforts and contributions of school council members. • Provide succession planning for executive positions within the school council.
Results	Results
Parents and community members become more involved in the school-based decision-making process and school council becomes more diverse and effective.	Volunteer members feel their work is important and valued and they are more likely to work for longer periods with the school council to achieve goals.

Introduction: Planning and Results Reporting



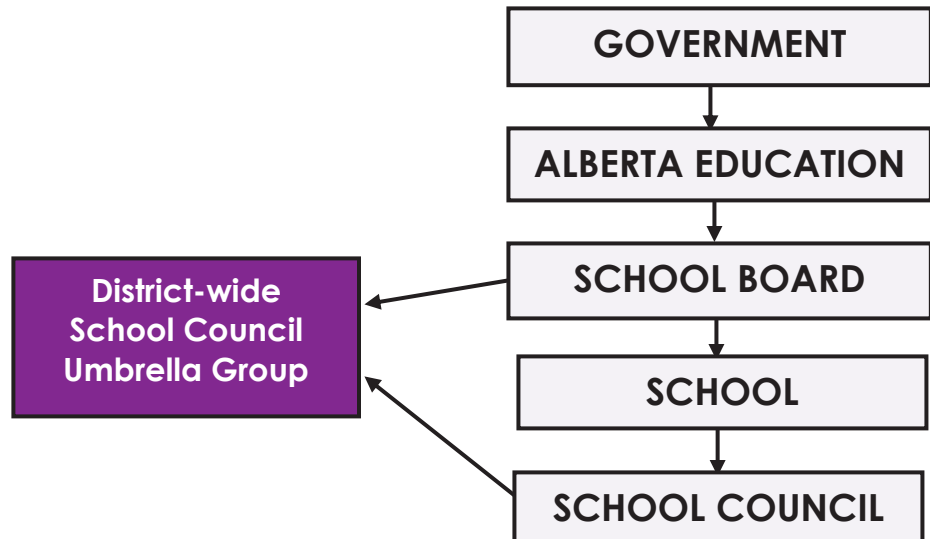
Included in this section:

- Aligned Planning
- School Council's Role in all Levels of Planning and Results Reporting
- Three-year Plans and Results Reports
- Summary: Planning and Results Reporting

School councils are important forums through which members of school communities play a role in school improvement planning. To increase meaningful involvement of parents, school councils should be aware of the three-year education plan of their school and consider developing a complementary school council plan.

Aligned Planning

With the goal of encouraging continuous improvement in learning for our children, Alberta Education has mandated province-wide, three-year education planning and results reporting for school boards and schools. Embedded within this process is the goal that every child achieves to the highest level possible. It is fundamental that people at each level of education strive to ensure the success of children. Each plan should align with the plan above it.



Background to Planning and Reporting

Section 16(2) of the *Government Accountability Act* requires organizations under the jurisdiction of government ministries to prepare business plans and annual reports for each fiscal year “in the form and at a time acceptable to the Minister.” Accountability in the basic education system is an ongoing cycle that enables continuous improvement and critical reflection. Key components are measuring progress and using results to inform decision making. Plans are developed on a three-year cycle and updated each year to respond to the past year’s performance results and changes in the operating environment. Alberta Education specifies what must be included in the education plan and school’s results report in the *Guide for Education Planning and Results Reporting*. The jurisdiction also outlines its requirements for the content of school reports.

Schools plan and implement three-year education plans that are aligned with school jurisdiction and provincial direction. Education plans for schools are developed by school administrators and staff, in consultation with school councils. *The Guide for School Board Planning and Results Reporting* states that “school councils must have the opportunity to participate in the development and implementation of the school’s plan and the opportunity to develop and include strategies the council intends to pursue to support the achievement of the outcomes in the school’s plan.” In addition, school and jurisdiction plans must describe how the school council was involved in the development of the plan.

At the end of each year, schools must prepare an education results report for their jurisdiction. The results report provides a summary of accomplishments and a report on performance. The jurisdiction uses this information to prepare its Annual Education Results Report (AERR) for Alberta Education.

The education plan and results report are public documents.

School Council’s Role in all Levels of Planning and Results Reporting

Section 1
School
Councils
Regulation

School councils can participate in three ways:

- provide advice in the development of the jurisdiction’s plan and results report
- provide advice on the school’s plan and results report
- create a school council’s three-year plan and results report.

Designing these plans and results reports involves vision, decision making, evaluation and critical thinking, all of which can be done best with the participation of all those who have an interest in the success of the school.

School Council Plans and Results Report:

- result in a set of common values from which the team derives its meaning
- foster a team approach that enables co-creation and shared decision making
- provide continuity of focus and purpose from year to year
- promote cohesiveness, as the focus is on common goals
- encourage examination of school and jurisdiction's strengths, needed growth areas, issues and trends
- provide an opportunity to celebrate successes and to address areas of need
- nurture ownership as the plan and report are crafted and implemented by the participants
- allow progress to be measured over time
- result in a tangible document that can inspire and attract others to participate.

Three-year Plans and Results Reports

Government

The Government of Alberta outlines its goals for the future and strategies to achieve those goals in a three-year business plan. The goals are broad-based statements, describing the ideal for the citizens of our province, such as "Alberta is the best place in the world to live, work and visit." Each Ministry or government department must also develop three-year plans, with goals that are connected to and aligned with those of the Province.

Alberta Education

Alberta Education has a three-year business plan that identifies goals aligned with the Government of Alberta's business plan.

Examples of provincial goals to be included in the jurisdiction and school three-year plans are:

Goal 1: High Quality Learning Opportunities for All

Goal 2: Excellence in Learner Outcomes

Goal 3: Highly Responsive and Responsible
District/School

Alberta Education is required to report the achievement of its goals, on an annual basis, as part of the government's accountability to the public. The Alberta Education Results Report is available at:
www.education.gov.ab.ca/annualreport/2005/ResultsReport.pdf.

Parents are involved in the development of goals and a review of Alberta Education's business plan each year, through the Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA). The AHSCA is invited, along with other education partner organizations, such as the Alberta School Boards Association, the Alberta Teachers' Association, the College of Alberta School Superintendents and the Association of School Business Officials of Alberta, to send representatives to the provincial table when these items are under discussion. Parents bring a valuable perspective to the establishment and review of provincial goals for education.

School Jurisdiction/Charter School Planning and Reporting

The school board develops three-year plans that must align with provincial goals as well as address local needs and issues and build on unique strengths. These plans assist boards to:

- improve education for all students
- identify student learning priorities
- guide decision making and budgeting
- enhance communication with parents and the public.

Umbrella groups of school council representatives that have jurisdiction-wide membership are ideal for giving input into the development of the jurisdiction's three-year plan.

The school board is responsible for submitting an Annual Education Results Report (AERR) to Alberta Education, which provides information on the jurisdiction and schools' major accomplishments and results of the past year. It includes results from surveys, provincial achievement tests and diploma exams, along with other information. This report is a public document and must be shared with all stakeholders.

School Planning and Reporting

The school's three-year education plan must complement the jurisdiction's three-year plan and address the unique context and issues at the school level. The school's plan reflects the culture, opportunities, challenges and values of its school community. This plan should have goals that are:

- specific
- measurable
- attainable
- relevant
- time specific.

Some components of the plan, such as strategies and priorities, are revamped annually. Thus, one year is completed and another is added to maintain a three-year time frame. Near the end of each year, schools must prepare an education results report for their jurisdiction.

Section 1
*School Councils
Regulation*

It is important that staff, students (if appropriate), parents and community members have an opportunity to provide input into the plan and to have the results interpreted to nurture broad ownership of the plan and results.

How to Get Involved in Three-year Education Planning

It is important to bring a parents' perspective to the school's three-year plan. The school council should be involved in discussion about goals for - both the students and the school. How does the school council become part of the school's planning?

- Ask for, verbally and in writing, an opportunity for representatives of school council to participate in the planning stages of the school and jurisdiction's budget process and for establishing the goals of the three-year plans.
- Ask for copies of the school and jurisdiction's current three-year plan.
- Ask for copies of the school and jurisdiction's annual budget.
- Show interest and willingness to participate in planning at the local and jurisdictional levels by talking to the local school trustee.
- Discuss potential goals for the school's three-year plan at a school council meeting.

If there is an umbrella group of school councils in the jurisdiction, discuss involvement in jurisdiction planning at a meeting.

School Three-year Planning:

- A school's three-year plan links with the school board's three-year plan.
- The principal generally begins the planning process with staff and school council in late February to mid March.
- The principal, staff and school council consider identified priorities from the last results report and budget planning documents from the previous year and review things, such as the year of the three-year term, changes in school community demographics, provincial priorities, programming needs, school jurisdiction/division focus and priorities and school council input.
- The principal submits a proposed budget document to the board for consideration, discussion and approval.

Appendix K
*Planning
Committee*

School Council Planning and Reporting

Some school councils develop a three-year plan that supports or parallels the goals of the school. It provides continuity of focus and purpose from year to year. This could result in retention of members, as they are encouraged to see a goal through to fruition.

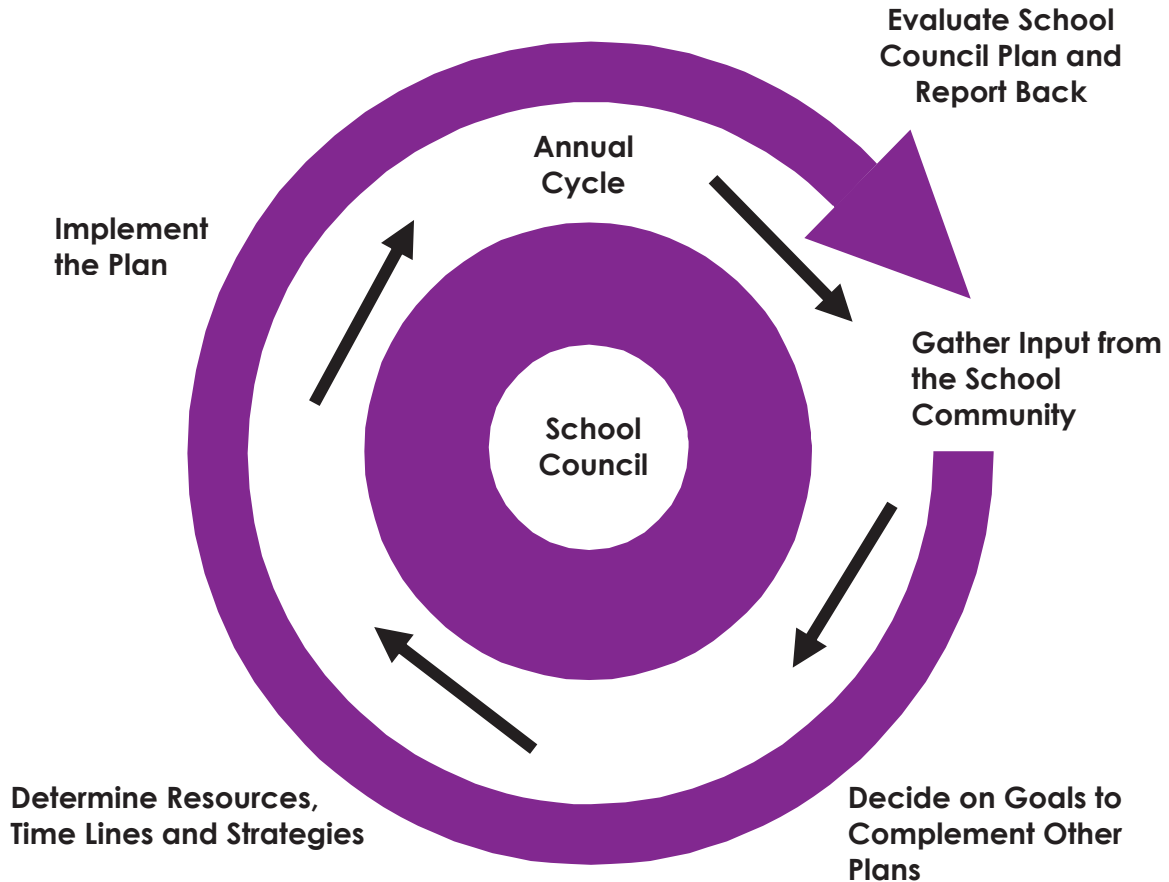
Some school councils use a planning committee to draft the plans, goals and strategies and bring them back to the membership for further input and adjustments.

Parents are important for planning because they:

- want the best for their children
- bring perspectives from beyond the classroom

- know their children’s needs, strengths and interests
- know what’s working by their children’s enthusiasm, joy and positive conversations
- advocate for needed changes, modifications or additions to programs, learning environments or resources
- bring a multiplicity of skills, talents and knowledge from all walks of life.

At the end of a specific event or initiative and at the end of the year, it is important for school councils to report on accomplishments to their membership and to provide a report to the school board/charter board.



Five Steps to Creating and Maintaining a School Council’s Plan

When a school council decides to develop a three-year plan, there are some simple steps to follow to gather information for developing goals that align with the school’s plan and reflect the interests of the community.

Step One: Scan the Environment and Gather Input

The first step is to review what's already in place:

- schools council's three-year plan and results report
- school's three-year plan and results report
- jurisdiction's three-year plan and results report.

Consider the wider school community and what the perceptions and expectations are of community members for the school. Assess and understand the expectations and needs of the school community.

Ask the Community What It Thinks

When a school council embarks upon the creation of a school council plan, it is important to understand the interests of the school community, including those of parents who normally don't attend a school council meeting. There are a number of ways to find out what is important to the broader community.

- Develop some questions that relate to student learning, school policies and procedures and facility concerns, as identified in the plan.
- Once you have selected a few questions that reflect the vision of the school council, you can:
 - develop a mail back survey form and send it to randomly selected households
 - have a phoning committee randomly call households
 - ask the questions informally at the hockey arena, coffee shop or grocery store
 - have school council members available at parent/teacher interviews, meet the teacher night, special assemblies or event days so you can ask parents who normally don't attend school council meetings what they think
 - attend a Legion, Rotary or Chamber of Commerce meeting or other service club event and ask for members' thoughts
 - ask the local councillors or aldermen their thoughts or ask for time at a town council meeting for input gathering.

If a school council chooses to survey the community, it is important to be cognizant of legal and ethical issues.

After the information gathering is complete, the school council or a committee established to take on this task looks for themes or trends. If a trend is identified, the school council can think about including this as a goal in its three-year plan.

Step Two: Decide on Goals

To be successful at achieving goals, concentrate on just a few – three or four at the most. This will prevent school councils from becoming overwhelmed by trying to do too much at once.

- a. First, generate a list of possible goals.
- b. Aim for goals that are **specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time specific (smart)**.

- c. Prioritize the goals.
- d. Then, select a few goals that could be achieved over three years.

Step Three: Create Strategies to Achieve the Goals and Determine the Resources

- a. Analyze the strategies, in relation to available human and financial resources, and the attainability within the school council's timelines.
- b. Select the most appropriate strategies.
- c. Create a time line for each strategy.
- d. Determine a measure of success for each strategy.

Step Four: Share and Implement the Plan and Results Report

- a. Once the plan is created, share it with the school and community.
- b. Launch the plan by assigning tasks, undertaking strategies and monitoring progress toward the goals.
- c. Report back progress and results to the school community and the jurisdiction.

Step Five: Review and Evaluate

- a. Update annually to keep on track.
- b. After an annual review, begin the steps again and add another year to ensure a continuous three-year planning cycle.

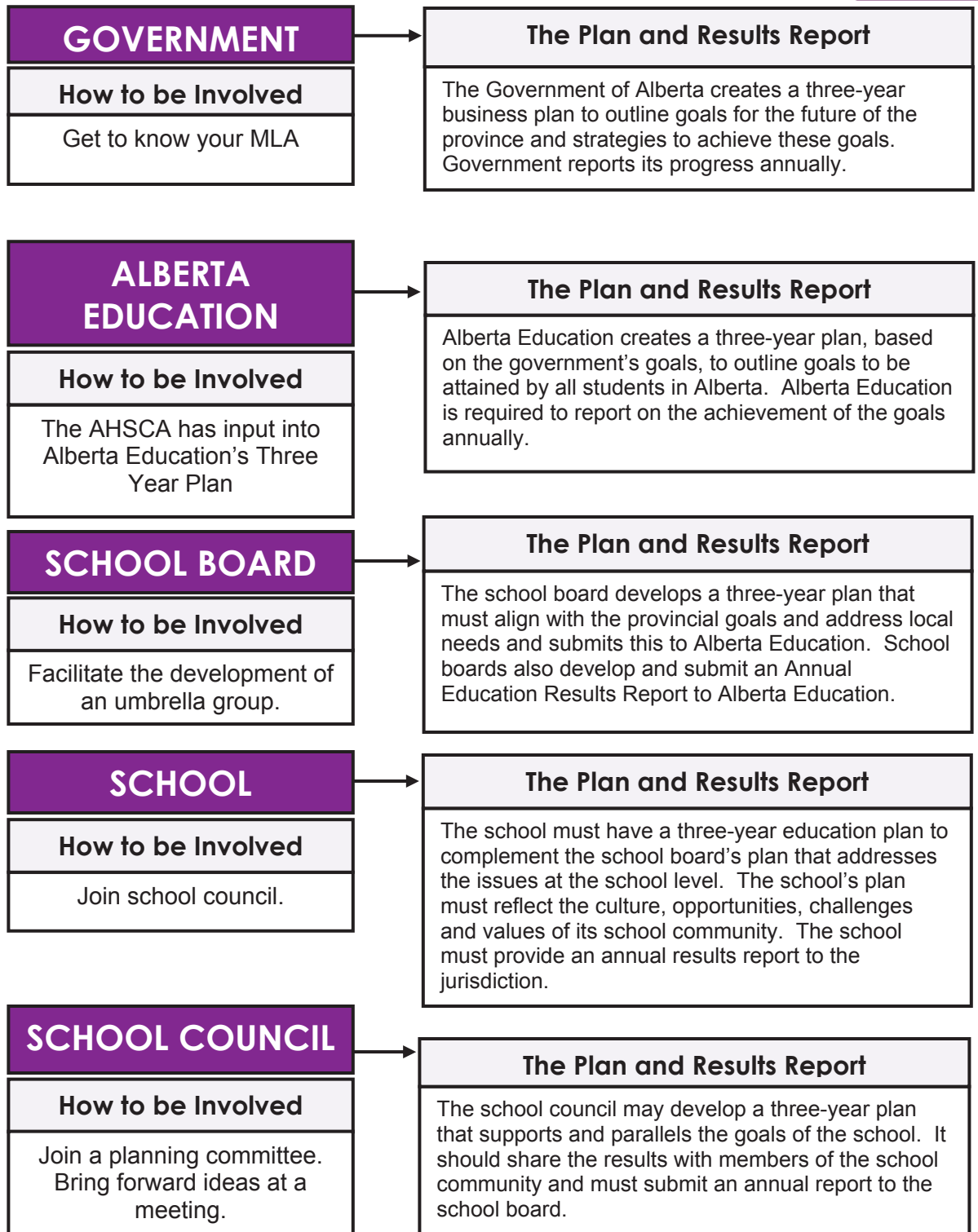
Communicate Your School Council's Plan and Results Report

Once the plan has been created and the goals in it are accomplished, it is important to share it with the school and school community. The more people who know and understand the work of the school council, the more the school council will be supported.

Here are some ways to spread the word:

- a letter to the school, the school board and superintendent, from the school council chair, with the three-year plan attached
- a copy of the plan for each student to take home
- speaking engagement at school or community meetings
- a summarized version of the plan in the school newsletter
- an article on school council activities included in the local newspaper
- a copy of the plan on the school and jurisdiction Web site.

Summary: Planning and Results Reporting



Introduction: School Councils/Fundraising Societies



Included in this section:

- School Councils and Fundraising Societies
- Framework and Functions
- Fundraising
- External Relationships and Legal/Ethical Issues
- Summary: School Councils and Fundraising Societies

School councils and fundraising societies are completely different entities. School councils are important forums through which members of school communities play an important role in school improvement planning. Fundraising societies are groups of people who have incorporated under the *Societies Act* or Part 9 of the *Companies Act*. Under current legislation, school councils may fundraise but cannot register as fundraising societies. By appreciating the similarities and differences between school councils and fundraising societies, school councils can improve their effectiveness to better meet the needs of the school community.

School Councils and Fundraising Societies

Providing Different Opportunities for Involvement

Where Have We Come From?

School councils evolved from or replaced Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), advancing the role of parents and others in the community from volunteers supporting the school, usually through extensive fundraising, to collaborative participants in school-based decision making. However, this change also raised new questions about how to handle fundraising issues and continue providing enhanced resources and support to the school.

Fundraising societies have been directly or indirectly connected with schools for decades. They are often program-specific and go by many names; e.g., Friends of Neighbourhood School or Neighbourhood School Band Society. Prior to the legislation that created school councils in Alberta, some PACs and Home and School Associations also registered as incorporated societies.

Making the Distinction

School councils and fundraising societies provide two separate and distinct contexts for parent and community involvement in the school. Identifying the functions that fall under each group - school council or fundraising society - can help make your existing organization more effective.

School councils provide a means for parents and community to work together with administration, staff and high school students to promote the well-being and overall effectiveness of the school community. Its main role is advisory.

Fundraising societies provide a means for parents and community members to provide additional financial resources and support to the school. Its main role is fundraising.

Framework and Functions

Why do school councils and fundraising societies exist?

Who's included? Who's responsible?

What function is performed by school councils and fundraising societies?

Answering these simple questions will establish the foundation and functions of school councils and fundraising societies.

Once an organization has established its reason for being (i.e., purpose) and the people with authority/responsibility (i.e., membership structure), it can decide what needs to get done (i.e., functions) and how to get it done.

School councils and fundraising societies perform some similar functions related to their purposes and structure, for example:

- hold an initial establishment meeting and annual general meetings, thereafter, to make sure an executive is in place
- orient members to their roles and responsibilities
- keep accurate meeting minutes, financial records and other paperwork to show accountability
- establish banking arrangements
- report annually, as required by their governing legislation
- discuss and decide matters of policy, priorities and by-laws/operating procedures
- hold regular meetings to discuss relevant issues, plan activities and share ideas/input
- build strong working relationships within the council/society as well as with others in the school community who don't attend meetings
- coordinate/follow through on activities, as planned
- communicate school council or society activities within the school community.

Comparing Purpose, Membership Structure and Functions

School councils and fundraising societies serve to contribute to school improvement and/or to enhance student learning. However, there are limitations on the responsibility and authority each organization has in making that contribution.

School Councils

School councils are collective associations of parents, teachers, secondary students, principals, staff and community representative(s) who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning. They are one means for parents to advise and consult with the principal and to advise the board or the charter board.

Section 1
School Councils
Regulation

Section 1
School Act –
Section 22

School council membership requirements are outlined in the *School Councils Regulation*. School councils have broad advisory authority and limited decision-making authority, as outlined in the *School Act* and the *School Councils Regulation*. For example, school councils may advise and consult, at their discretion, with the principal and school board on any matter relating to the school – thereby influencing school-based decision making.

The school council must be particularly respectful of the decision-making responsibilities of one council member – the principal, who is the key educational leader at the school level and who holds responsibility for directing the management of the day-to-day operations of the school. Teacher representatives, too, have responsibilities as employees that must be respected by other school council members. Therefore, the actual decision-making authority of the school council, as a whole, is limited to a) developing policies at the school level, as described in the *School Act*, b) planning support activities that align with school council's purpose and c) choosing what advice to provide the principal and board on relevant topics.

Section 3
Roles and
Responsibilities in
School Councils

The minimum school council membership is defined in the *School Councils Regulation*. School councils may choose to expand membership beyond these minimums by spelling out membership in a set of by-laws/operating procedures.

Fundraising Societies

Fundraising societies or companies have a broad scope in their specific purpose, membership structure and functions. Whether the society/company's goal is to support the school band and sports teams or to enhance school facilities and extracurricular programs, the members are responsible for establishing a collective purpose and criteria for membership as part of the process of applying for incorporation.

A fundraising society or company is a self-governing legal entity, under the *Societies Act* or Part 9 of the *Companies Act*, with the authority and responsibility to make necessary decisions to manage its operations and activities. The society or company will have a board of directors, chosen according to the by-laws/operating procedures established and maintained

by the society, or company. The by-laws/operating procedures of a society or company must be filed and approved by Alberta's Corporate Registry. Besides the members who serve on the board of directors, society, or company, membership must be defined in the by-laws/operating procedures.

Due to the potential confusion when school communities have both a school council and a fundraising society, membership in each organization should be clearly defined and communicated to parents and guardians.

The society or company's goals should be described in its by-laws/operating procedures and policies. These will be different from those outlined for school councils as a society holds no status as a school council and has no authority to advise or consult for school-based decision-making purposes.

The summary at the end of this section summarizes this information in chart form.

Fundraising

Appendix N Effective Fundraising Practices

Should school councils fundraise?

Raising funds to enhance the learning environment for students may be performed by both school councils and fundraising societies.

Fundraising is not an expected activity of school councils, whose main role is advisory. Many feel that fundraising limits the ability of a school council to operate effectively because it splits the focus and divides energies. The school council, as a whole, must decide the extent to which its purpose is likely to be enhanced or compromised as a result of fundraising efforts.

Section 1 School Councils Regulation

Under the *School Councils Regulation*, "no school council shall incorporate under the *Societies Act* or Part 9 of the *Companies Act*." This means school councils that choose to fundraise are limited to types of fundraising that do not require incorporation. School councils are ineligible to apply for a gaming license, for fundraising purposes. It is important to check with the principal and school jurisdiction office to determine the process to issue charitable receipts for school council fundraised dollars.

A school community may express its fundraising preferences through one of four basic models:

Model 1 An active school council that conducts very little, if any, fundraising. No fundraising society or company exists. Any expenses incurred by the school council are covered out of the school's operating budget, perhaps under a separate budget category. The school council's focus is the effectiveness and well-being of the school; its goals do not

	include supporting the school through fundraising.
Model 2	An active school council that takes responsibility for all fundraising within the school and there is no incorporated society. This school council would be limited to using only those types of fundraising that do not require the organization to incorporate.
Model 3	An incorporated society does all the fundraising. They may also choose to organize activities or programs related to their specific goals.
Model 4	Both a school council and a fundraising society raise funds, within the parameters of their respective legislation.

School council members must decide the extent to which the school council's purpose is likely to be enhanced or compromised as a result of fundraising efforts. The school council can use a structured planning process to determine its goals related to fundraising.

Members who serve on a school council can also serve on a fundraising society, and vice versa, unless the bylaws of either organization prohibit it.

What Works?

"The school councils I have been associated with all have no involvement whatsoever in the fundraising associations of the schools. Each association has a completely separate board with separate meetings. Admittedly, at one of the schools the fundraising association's board met directly before the school council, and usually had the same people involved. Any monies that the school council or school ever wanted had to be formally requested from the association and subsequently approved by association vote. At the high school level, the two bodies were completely separate, including totally different executives and different meeting nights. In all cases, all monies were kept in very separate bank accounts from the schools, with signing authorities remaining within the association's executives."

Dorcas Kilduff, Parent, Spruce Grove

External Relationships and Legal/Ethical Issues

External Relationships

Both school councils and fundraising societies are built on relationships between their members. Both organizations rely on strong internal relationships between and among their officers, other members and the wider school community.

School councils and fundraising societies differ, however, in the types of external relationships they establish in the course of their work. For example, a school council wishing to advise the board or charter board on

its policy about school fees would communicate with its school trustee or charter board member. A fundraising society wishing to raise money through a bingo communicates with Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission personnel. The organization's purpose determines the types of external relationships it develops.

Communication

Effective communication is key to the success of any organization. School councils communicate with the membership and the larger community to represent the voice of the school community. They communicate with the principal and the board to advise and consult and to ensure the voice of the school community is represented in the decision-making process.

Fundraising societies work with their membership to set priorities and plan activities related to their goals. Depending on the relationship between the society and the school council, if any, the society may communicate with the council for the purpose of partnership or to establish complementary goals.

Legal and Ethical Issues

Appendix N Effective Fundraising Practices

Financial Management

The *School Act* sets out the legislative framework for school councils to determine their operating procedures. A school council's by-laws/operating procedures may address issues, such as signing authority, maintaining financial records and reporting the information.

On a school council, signing authority may be held by two or three of the executive members. Funds raised belong to the school community and council members should pay attention to existing school board policies regarding signing authority. One of the school board's responsibilities is to monitor and account for school-generated funds, so it is important for school councils and fundraising societies to understand how much, if any, of their fundraising efforts fall into this category.

Both school councils and fundraising societies are responsible for ensuring ethical and accountable stewardship of the organization. They hold responsibility for public trust. This means the organization is accountable to the community for its success in carrying out its purpose and in meeting its ethical and legal obligations.²

Insurance

School councils have insurance coverage under their school board's/charter board's liability insurance, as per the government policy on school councils. Members of fundraising societies are not protected under school board insurance. These societies may choose to purchase their own liability insurance. The exposure to risk of liability can best be

² *Board Development Program*

reduced by becoming informed about and practicing good management of the society's activities³.

Appendix O

Sample Contact
Permission Form

FOIP Guidelines and Practices:

http://www3.gov.ab.ca/foip/guidelines_practices/index.cfm

Appendix P

Privacy Legislation

Appendix Q

*Personal
Information
Protection Act-*
Frequently Asked
Questions (FAQs)

Appendix F

Sample School
Council Annual
Report

Complying with Privacy Legislation

Statutes

Two separate statutes govern the use of personal information within schools:

1. **FOIP-** School boards and school employees operate under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). FOIP legislation defines the amount and nature of personal information that can be shared and for what purposes. All jurisdiction staff are subject to FOIP regulations when handling personal information.
2. **PIPA-** School councils and fundraising societies operate under the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA). PIPA legislation governs the collection and use of personal information for organizations that are not public bodies.

Mandatory reporting – Who needs to know?

Apart from a responsibility to report to the larger school community, school councils are responsible under the *School Act* to submit an annual report to the school board/charter board. Reporting must be in accordance with PIPA. This report helps boards measure and be accountable for parent and community involvement within the jurisdiction. Your school council may wish to inquire whether your board has already developed a reporting form.

Fundraising societies are responsible under different statutes for reporting on the varying aspects of their activities. All societies fall within the statutes of the Alberta Corporate Registry, and some with the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission, depending on the group's gaming activities.

³ Alberta Community Development's **Board Development Program** provides more detailed information on the legal and ethical responsibilities of incorporated societies.

Summary: School Councils and Fundraising Societies



Similarities	Differences
Purpose	
<p>Fundamental purpose (i.e., why it exists) supports improvements to students' learning environment.</p>	<p>School councils exist to advise the principal and school board on matters relating to the school.</p> <p>Fundraising societies have fundraising as a main role; details are established when applying for incorporation.</p>
Membership Structure	
<p>Authority is granted through legislation.</p> <p>Membership is established from within the school community.</p>	<p>School councils have legislated advisory and decision-making authority defined within the <i>School Act</i> and related policies. School councils have no governing or management authority over the school, only self-governing authority related to by-laws/operating procedures.</p> <p>Fundraising societies have all governing, management and implementation authority granted through the <i>Societies Act</i> or Part 9 of the <i>Companies Act</i>.</p> <p>School council membership is mandated by the <i>School Act</i> and <i>School Councils Regulation</i>. Membership may be expanded through changes to the school council by-laws/operating procedures.</p> <p>Fundraising societies' membership is determined by the society.</p>
Functions	
<p>Decisions are related to their purpose.</p> <p>Regular meetings are held and minutes are kept.</p> <p>They undertake activities linked with purpose.</p> <p>They report on activities.</p>	<p>School councils' decisions focus on providing advice to the principal and school board, creating policies for its function in the school, organizing activities to enhance student learning and involving the wider community in school improvement planning.</p> <p>Fundraising societies' decisions focus on methods of fundraising and uses of funds raised.</p> <p>School councils report on decisions and activities to the whole school community and must submit an annual report to the school board, as required under the <i>School Act</i>.</p> <p>Fundraising societies must present an audited financial statement to members at an annual general meeting, an annual report to Corporate Registry, as required under their governing statutes, and specific reports to Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission as required.</p>

Summary: School Councils and Fundraising Societies



Similarities	Differences
Relationships	
<p>Relationships, related to purpose, are established in the course of doing business.</p> <p>There is communication with members and relationship partners to plan, set goals and establish priorities.</p> <p>Appropriate conflict resolution processes are developed.</p>	
Legal and Ethical Issues	
<p>Both are responsible for ethical and accountable stewardship.</p> <p>Both groups handle personal information and must comply with Privacy Legislation.</p> <p>Both report to membership and have a responsibility to report to external organizations.</p>	<p>School councils have liability protection through the school board, under the <i>School Act</i>; see Insurance and Liability.</p>

Section 7: Appendices

Appendix

- A Sample Agendas
- B Chairing the Meeting
- C Sample Minutes
- D Committee Formation and Operation
- E Building a School Council - By-laws/Operating Procedures
- F Sample School Council Annual Report
- G The Recruitment Committee
- H Sample Welcome Letter
- I Make School Council Meetings Positive and Productive
- J Checklist for School Council Meetings
- K Planning Committee
- L School Council Checkup
- M Sample School Council Three-year Plans
- N Effective Fundraising Practices
- O Sample Contact Permission Form
- P Privacy Legislation
- Q *Personal Information Protection Act* - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- R Glossary and References

Appendix A: Sample Agendas

_____ **School Council Meeting**
Date: _____ **Time:** _____
Location: _____

AGENDA

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 7:00 - 7:05 p.m. | 1. CALL TO ORDER <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approval of Agenda |
| 7:05 - 7:10 p.m. | 2. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES For Decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of previous meeting• Business arising |
| 7:10 – 7:45 p.m. | 3. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES (e.g., band parents, sports group) <ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1 _____1.2 _____1.3 _____ |
| 7:45 - 7:50 p.m. | 4. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS (e.g., Alberta Home and School Councils' Association (AHSCA), trustee/charter board member) |
| 7:50 - 7:55 p.m. | 5. PRINCIPAL/STAFF REPORT |
| 7:55 - 8:00 p.m. | 6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FOR DECISION AND ACTION |
| 8:00 - 8:05 p.m. | BREAK |
| 8:05 - 8:30 p.m. | 7. PRESENTATION BY AISI COORDINATOR |
| 8:30 - 8:40 p.m. | 8. NEW BUSINESS FOR REFERRAL <ul style="list-style-type: none">8.1 _____8.2 _____ |
| 8:40 - 8:45 p.m. | 9. MEETING EVALUATION INFORMATION |
| 8:45 p.m. | 10. NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT |

_____ School Council Meeting
Date: _____ Time: _____
Location: _____

AGENDA

- 1.0 CALL TO ORDER

- 2.0 INTRODUCTIONS

- 3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA 5 minutes
(Members may request an item be added to the agenda at this time.)

- 4.0 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING 5 minutes

- 5.0 BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES 30 minutes
 - 5.1 Discussion of jurisdiction's 3 Year Education Plan
 - 5.2 _____
 - 5.3 _____
 - 5.4 _____

- 6.0 REPORTS:
 - 6.1 Communication committee report 10 minutes
 - 6.2 Trustee/charter board member report
 - 6.3 Principal's report 20 minutes
 - 6.3.1 Interpretation of Provincial Test Results
 - 6.3.2 _____
 - 6.3.3 _____
 - 6.3.4 _____
 - 6.4 Alberta Home and School Councils' representative report

- 7.0 NEXT MEETING DATE, ADJOURNMENT

Appendix B: Chairing the Meeting

Characteristics of a Good Chairperson:

- Recognizes the similarities and differences of groups.
- Emphasizes interests and concerns.
- Acknowledges and values the different roles people play in group situations.
- Works towards building trust, respect, empathy and effective communication between school council members.
- Fosters collaboration on school council issues.
- Allows for evaluation at the end of the meeting.
- Listens carefully to alternate points of view.

Responsibilities of the Chairperson:

- Determine whether issues will be consultative, advisory or require a school council decision.
- Set the climate of the meeting.
- Provide the agenda seven days prior to the meeting date.
- Ensure the agenda is approved as the first order of business.
- Keep the discussion flowing in a collaborative fashion.
- Summarize the main points before moving to the next item or before making a decision.
- Encourage participation from all members.
- Acknowledge that each person's comments contribute to the success of the meeting.
- Clarify the results of collaborative discussion and summarize the actions upon which the group decided.
- Be a harmonizer during conflict.

Simple Rules for Chairing a Meeting:

- The chairperson calls the meeting to order.
- The meeting's formality depends on the chairperson, the group's size and the group's preference.
- The chairperson recognizes members before they speak.
- Each item is entitled to full and free debate by individual members - one at a time.
- Each person who desires to speak should be allowed to speak once before anyone speaks a second time.
- Motions should be dealt with according to a Rules of Order or parliamentary procedure (see page 3).
- The chairperson is responsible for moving the meeting along and ensuring no one monopolizes the floor.
- Only one subject may be discussed at a time.
- If time does not permit full discussion of an item, a motion may be made to table the item for discussion at another meeting.
- Every member has equal rights.

Appendix C: Sample Minutes

_____ School Council
Date: _____ **Time:** _____
Location: _____

Minutes

The regular council meeting was called to order by Suzie at 7:03 p.m. and a quorum was present.

Chairperson: Suzie

Present: Suzie, Jeanne, Rosa, Viktor, Gail, Ahmed, George, Michelle, Bill, Maher

The agenda was approved as presented, or, as amended.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as read. *If they were photocopied and distributed before the meeting they can be approved, as circulated, and you don't have to spend time reading them aloud at the meeting. If there were errors, indicate the minutes were approved with corrections.*

Business Arising:

Reports:

- By-law Committee report was given by Rosa. A draft of the by-laws/operating procedures was circulated for consideration and will be discussed and approved, if possible, at the next meeting.
- The band parents reported on the planned trip to Calgary for the spring festival.
- Trustee report – Viktor reported that the board has just had its Annual Education Results Report interview with Alberta Education and the board was found to comply with all requirements. The board will soon begin its planning process for the next school year and looks forward to input from school council.
- Principal's report – Jeanne reported that our new open hall policy is causing a few problems with littering, but teachers are finding the students are settling faster in the mornings. She also explained Grade Level of Achievement Reporting (GLA).

Old Business:

- Evaluation of progress toward goals to date:

- Gail noted the after school parent/child reading club and book exchange has been a huge success with an average of 45 parents and children attending each session. It was decided to continue the program for another year and to discuss ways of bringing in older students at the next meeting.
- Ahmed noted we were still behind in establishing a resource list of individuals in the community who are specialists in the field of technology. He noted the time involved contacting parents and businesses was more than expected.
- It was decided to expand the committee and Michelle, Maher and Bill agreed to serve on the committee.

New Business:

- Teachers appreciation luncheon
 - George volunteered to head the appreciation committee. It was decided we would have a continental breakfast for the teachers instead of a luncheon.

Motion: THAT WE ASK THE SCHOOL FUNDRAISING ASSOCIATION TO REPORT ON ANY FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES THAT EXIST.

Mover: Jessica

Seconder: Gail

CARRIED.

The next meeting will be a special meeting to discuss by-laws/operating procedures on March 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the library. The next regular meeting will be March 23 in the library.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Approved _____
Secretary

Approved _____
Chair

Appendix D: Committee Formation and Operation

Members of school council can't do everything themselves. It's critical to the success of the school council that tasks be delegated to committees, when necessary. These committees could be established with people outside of regular school council membership. Parents, teachers and members of the community who are unable to be regular members of school council may be willing to serve on short-term committees.

Effective committee work helps make school council meetings brief and effective. They also enable the school council to accomplish much more.

- Committees are formed after initial school council discussion.
- Items requiring more lengthy discussion or research are assigned to a committee.
- Committees make decisions or recommendations, according to the mandate provided by school council.
- Standing committees operate on an ongoing basis, with specified lengths of terms for members.
- Ad hoc committees are formed, as necessary, and are to work within a specified time period.

Committee members should:

- be willing to participate, both individually and as a team
- be willing to prepare evaluations and reports, as required
- set priorities early and follow through
- provide a link between the school, the parents and the community
- listen to all views and represent the school community's wishes
- work towards consensus.

Committees your school council may wish to consider:

- **Constitution or Operational Procedures Committee** to review or prepare the school council constitution and/or operational procedures to present to school council for discussion and approval. Committees may also work toward developing a school council mission statement or vision statement.
- **Three Year Education Plan Committee** to plan advice to the principal.
- **Special Events Committee** to plan Appreciation Luncheon
- **Communications Committee** to plan and carry out communication strategies to improve the links between home and school, between the general community and the school and local media.
- **Fundraising Committee** to plan and coordinate fundraising campaigns for special projects, if required.
- **Education - Business Partnership Committee** to help establish partnerships that enhance student learning with community businesses.

Appendix E: Building a School Council - By-laws/Operating Procedures

A school council can create bylaws/operating procedures to assist it in functioning effectively. The *School Act* and the *School Councils Regulation 113/2007* provide a school council with the parameters to begin creating their own bylaws/operating procedures. A school council may decide its governance model and what will be included in its bylaws/operating procedures. The following sample is designed to allow you to consider what you may wish to incorporate into your bylaws/operating procedures. It includes choices and different models of governance and is not meant to be definitive for every school council. Additional information is located on the pages identified in the manual.

School Council Mission *Page 9*

What is the purpose of your school council?

School Council Goals *Page 11*

Your purpose made more specific –What will you do?

Governance of School Council *Page 1*

What model of governance will your school council adopt?

Decision Making Models *Page 2, Page 5*

What will be the decision-making model for your school council? Who is permitted to vote? Does your school council need a quorum? How will the quorum be defined?

Meetings *School Councils Regulation Section 17, Page 5*

What will be the procedures for regular meetings, annual general meetings and special meetings?

Members of School Council *School Act Section 22 (2), School Councils Regulation Section 8 and 9, Page 1, 40*

Who are the members of your school council? Are members elected or is every parent of a student enrolled in the school a member of school council?

What will be the executive positions? What will be their term of office? Does the executive have authority beyond other school council members? How will vacancies be filled?

Roles and Responsibilities of School Council Members *Page 13-17*

What are the roles and responsibilities of the members and the executive?

Committees *Page 5, Appendix D, G, K*

What committees, (if any), will the school council have?

How will the school council create committees and their terms of reference?

Relationship with Fundraising Society *Page 41, 42*

What will be the relationship of school council with the fundraising society, if there is a society?

Reporting *School Councils Regulation Section 14, Page 44* (Minimum requirements are outlined in *School Councils Regulation*, in Section 1 of this manual.)
To whom will the school council report?

Funds from Fundraising *Page 7, 41 - 43*

What will be the purpose of a fundraising activity? How will school council funds be managed? Who will manage the funds? Who will decide how the funds are distributed? What is the policy of the school board regarding school council funds?

Amendments *Page 5*

How and when will the school council's bylaws/operating procedures be amended?

Policies *School Act Section 22 (5), Page 1, 9, 10*

Will the school council develop policy in addition to the bylaws/operating procedures to assist it in its year to year operation? How will policy be created?

Code of Ethics *Page 6, 7*

What will be your code of ethics?

Privacy

Page 44, Appendix P, Q

Who will be the school council member designated to ensure the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) and privacy issues are understood and implemented for the school council? Who will be the school council member responsible to manage the personal information of school council members and school community members involved with school council?

Sample School Council By-laws

(By-laws are operating procedures)

NAME

1. The name of the school council shall be Northview Elementary School Council.

MISSION

2. To foster the well-being and effectiveness of our school community and to enhance student learning.

GOALS

3. The goals of the school council, in keeping with the *School Act* and the *School Councils Regulation*, are to:
 - a. provide advice (i.e., input) to the staff and principal on issues of importance, such as the school philosophy, mission and vision, school discipline policies, school improvement plans, programs and directions and budget allocations to meet student needs
 - b. stimulate continuous improvement in meaningful involvement by all members of the school community
 - c. facilitate collaboration among concerned participants of the school community
 - d. support an approach to schooling in which decisions are made collaboratively and, wherever possible, at the school and classroom level
 - e. facilitate the development of a common vision for our school
 - f. facilitate a formal performance evaluation of our school council and communicate the results of this evaluation to the school board and the school community
 - g. keep the school board informed—in cooperation with the principal—of the needs of the school
 - h. support the school in its efforts to focus teachers' time and school resources on the essential tasks of teaching and learning
 - i. facilitate communication with educational stakeholders and the community.

GOVERNANCE and MEMBERSHIP - Representative Model

4. (1) The membership of the school council shall consist of:
 - a. (x) number of parents of students enrolled in Northview Elementary School (one of the parents should be a parent of a child in the Early Childhood Services Program), elected by parents at the annual general meeting
 - b. the parents elected represent all of the school community,
 - c. the principal of Northview Elementary School
 - d. one or more teachers from Northview Elementary School, appointed or elected by Northview Elementary School teachers
 - e. a community member, selected by the council (optional)

GOVERNANCE and MEMBERSHIP - Town Hall Model

4. (2) The membership of the school council shall consist of:
 - a. the parents of students enrolled in Northview Elementary School
 - b. the principal of Northview Elementary School
 - c. teachers and support staff of Northview Elementary School

5. (a) The positions of the executive committee shall consist of:
 - a. A chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer (if required)
 - b. All executive positions must be filled by parents of students enrolled at Northview Elementary School
 - c. Every member of the school council and/or parent of a student enrolled at Northview Elementary School or children in the Early Childhood Services Program are eligible to be elected to an executive position on school council.
 - d. The terms of office are the annual general meeting to the following annual general meeting.
 - e. The executive of school council can be elected by parents of students enrolled at Northview Elementary School attending the annual general meeting or at the first school council meeting by school council members.

Town Hall Governance

- 5 (b) a. The executive committee will prepare the agenda for the general meetings and circulate minutes of the same.
- b. The executive committee will carry out the day-to-day operation of the school council.

DECISION -MAKING

6. (a) Decisions at school council meetings will be made by consensus as much as possible. The decision made by consensus must be stated clearly and recorded as such in the minutes of the meeting.
- (b) If a decision is made by a vote, the motion must be moved and seconded and passed by the majority of school council members.

QUORUM

7. Quorum will be attained when the majority of voting members present at a meeting are parents of students enrolled in Northview Elementary School

DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE

8. (a) THE CHAIR

The chair plans meetings and prepares agendas, facilitates school council meetings, acts as spokesperson for the school council (unless otherwise delegated) and supports the school council. The chair serves as the Alberta Home and Schools Councils' representative. The chair ensures the school board receives an annual report from school council.

8. (b) THE VICE-CHAIR

The vice-chair assists the chair with duties, as assigned, and in the absence of the chair, assumes the duties of the chair. The vice-chair is the designated Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)/Privacy officer of school council and manages personal information in compliance with PIPA. The vice-chair assumes responsibility, in consultation with school council, for communicating with the fundraising society.

8. (c) THE SECRETARY

The secretary keeps accurate minutes and records of school council meetings, documents and files all correspondence and communications and keeps an accurate list of names and addresses of school council members in compliance with the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA). The secretary ensures all materials relating to the Northview Elementary School Council including resources (School Council Resource Manual), all meeting minutes and any relevant documents are available to the public in an accessible location in Northview Elementary School.

8. (d) THE TREASURER (if required)

The treasurer keeps financial transactions of the school council, reports to the school council and complies with school council and school board policies.

VACANCIES

9. (a) With the exception of the school council position filled by the principal, the school council may appoint school council members and/or school community members to fill vacancies until the election at the next annual general meeting.

COMMITTEES

10. A school council may appoint committees that consist of school council members and/or school community members. Committees report on their activities at school council meetings and meet outside of school council meetings to complete their assigned tasks.

MEETINGS

11. (a) The first meeting of the school council is held 20 school days after the annual general meeting.
- (b) The school council will meet a minimum of seven times during the school year.
- (c) Regular meeting dates will be determined by school council members attending the first meeting and/or by the executive of the school council.
- (d) Meetings will take place at the school unless indicated with a 20 school day notice to change location.
- (e) Special meetings of the school council may be called by the executive or at the written request of (X) number of parents of students enrolled at Northview Elementary School.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

12. (a) The annual general meeting of the school council will be held within 20 school days after the start of the school year or at an appropriate time during the school year determined by the school council.
- (b) The meeting will be advertised throughout the school and the community at the beginning of the school year until the date of the AGM or within 20 school days of the AGM date.
- (c) Election of school council members and/or executive positions will take place at the AGM.
- (d) All parents of students attending Northview Elementary School are eligible for election.
- (e) All parents of students attending the Northview Elementary School are eligible to vote at the AGM.
- (f) The business of the AGM shall include:
 - election of school council members and/or executive members
 - proposed by-laws/operating procedures amendments
 - motion to accept a financial statement of the previous year
 - plans and budget for the upcoming year
 - discussion of any major issues in which parents should have input, such as:
 - changes to the vision or mission statement of the school
 - major changes in the school program or focus
 - formal evaluation of the school council.

ANNUAL REPORT

13. (a) In accordance with *School Councils Regulation*, the school council, through the chair, prepares and provides the school board with an annual report submitted by September 30th that includes:
 - a summary of school council's activities of the previous year
 - a financial statement
 - a copy of the minutes of each meeting.
- (b) The school council will make the annual report available to all members of the school community.

AMENDMENTS TO THE BY-LAWS/OPERATING PROCEDURES

14. (a) The by-laws remain in force from year to year, unless amended at the AGM.
- (b) The by-laws of the school council may be amended by a majority vote of the school council at an AGM.
- (c) Notice of proposed by-law amendments must be circulated with the notice the AGM.

CODE OF ETHICS

15. All school council members shall:

- abide by the legislation that governs them
- be guided by the mission statement of the school and school council
- endeavour to be familiar with school policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them
- practice the highest standards of honesty, accuracy, integrity and truth
- recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community
- declare any conflict of interest
- encourage a positive atmosphere in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued
- apply democratic principles
- consider the best interests of all students
- respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school council
- not disclose confidential information
- limit discussions at school council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole
- use the appropriate communication channels when questions or concerns arise
- promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community
- accept accountability for decisions
- not accept payment for school council activities.

PRIVACY

16. (a) School council shall adhere to the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA).
(b) School council shall not share personal information for purposes other than those of school council business.

POLICIES

17. (a) School council may develop policy for the duration of their term.
(b) The policies of school council will be reviewed at the beginning of every new school council term to decide if each policy will be implemented for the new school council and its term.

FUNDRAISING SOCIETY

18. (a) School council will communicate regularly with the fundraising society to support their activities and to solicit support for school council activities.
(b) School council can develop policy to promote a productive open and transparent relationship with the fundraising society.

SCHOOL COUNCIL FUNDRAISING

19. (a) School council will, where possible, encourage the fundraising society to do the fundraising for the school and the school community.
(b) School council can fundraise and funds can be kept in a school council bank account or given to the school.
(c) School council's funds given to the school will be subject to the school board's policy on school council fundraising.

September 2007 revisions to Appendix E result in pages 61 – 65 being changed.
The online edition of this manual has updated page numbering.

Appendix F: Sample School Council Annual Report

School: _____ Reporting Year: _____

Executive: *List the members who held positions as officers in the past year.*

Name

Position

Meeting Dates: *List the dates of regular school council meetings.*

Date of First School Council Meeting of the Year: _____

School Council Activities: *Summarize the major activities of the past year and provide an overview of activities or initiatives planned for the next year.*

Financial Statement (attached): *Summarizes the finances handled by the school council during the past year, if applicable.*

School Council Chair

Date

Appendix G: The Recruitment Committee

Effective committees can be one of the most important working forces in a school council. A recruitment committee could be set up early in the school year to plan and implement methods of continually encouraging parents and school community members to attend school council meetings and/or to get involved at the school in other ways. Members need to familiarize themselves with the roles of their committee, which may include:

- referring to the three-year plans for the school and school council
- finding the specific focus for the year
- identifying who is planning to leave the school council and which strengths will be lost
- deciding whether there are executive positions to be filled in the future and which skills will be needed
- assessing which qualities and skills will be required to complete the plans and goals of the school council
- familiarity with school community to seek out volunteers
- developing a recruitment plan
- assessing the qualities of the school council meetings and why members attend or not
- identifying ways to publicize school council meetings
- identifying strategies to make everyone in the school community feel they are contributing and important members of the school council.

Tips for Recruiting Committee Members

To increase attendance and/or participation in committee meetings, consider some or all of the following:

- Ensure the committee chair understands and can convey the role of the committee to members.
- Ensure the committee members understand how the committee contributes to the school's mission.
- Strive to represent the diversity of the school community.
- Have ground rules that support participation and attendance. Revisit the ground rules at every meeting and post them on the bottom of agendas.
- Attempt to provide individual assignments to committee members.
- Generate minutes for each committee meeting to get closure on items and help members comprehend the progress made by the committee.

Reporting

- Committees are directly responsible to the school council.
- Committee reports should be included as agenda items for school council meetings. The committee chair usually presents a report.
- Specific recommendations should be listed at the end of the report.
- It is essential to be concise – the time saved by referring the business to a committee may be negligible.
- The report should clearly indicate that full discussion was held and all options considered.

Appendix H: Sample Welcome Letter

Welcome to School Council!

A school council is a collective association of parents, teachers, secondary students, the principal and community representative(s) who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning. It is a vehicle for parents to advise and consult with the principal and to advise the board or the charter board on matters relating to the school.

We are happy that you have chosen to commit your time and talents to our school council. Your support is important to the education of the children within our community and we hope that you find this experience rewarding.

There are many opportunities for involvement, in addition to attending the regular school council meetings, sitting on a short-term committee or offering to share your skills with the group. We welcome your participation in any way that works for you.

We have provided a welcome package to help you become familiar with the work we do as a school council. Included are *(the contents of your welcome package)*. Please feel free to contact me to discuss any questions you may have. I look forward to working with you this year.

Name
School Council Chair

Phone:
E-mail:

Appendix I: Make School Council Meetings Positive and Productive⁴

Meetings should be informative, well organized and held at convenient times.

- Try to make school council meetings as convenient as possible for parents.
 - Rotate meeting nights – include some day time or early morning breakfast meetings.
 - Parents may have children at more than one school – try to set meeting dates that don't conflict with meetings or events at feeder schools.
 - Hold some meetings at other locations; e.g., library, temple, community centre.
 - Provide babysitting for parents with young children – ask secondary school students to help with babysitting and offer them community service hours.

- Make sure parents know and understand the purpose of the meetings.
 - Have clearly established missions, goals and objectives.
 - Pursue activities and events that support student success – don't let personal issues or the concerns of individual parents dominate meetings.
 - Do not give parents jobs the first time they show up at a meeting – let them have time to learn about school council before asking for more commitment .

- Run meetings efficiently.
 - Set school council meeting dates and topics, if possible, early in the year and publicize them regularly.
 - Develop a dynamic and proactive action plan at the beginning of the year and follow it.
 - Set an agenda for each meeting and send it out ahead of time.
 - Keep meetings short – start and finish on time.
 - Use the agenda to set time limits for reports and discussion and try to stay within those limits.
 - Set up subcommittees to handle more involved issues and have most of the discussions at that level – ask subcommittee members to come to school council with clear recommendations for action.
 - Encourage more co-roles on school council; e.g., co-chair, co-treasurers; when one member retires, the person in the co-role will have the skills and experience to take over the position.

- Make meetings interesting and informative.
 - Survey parents for topics of interest or speakers they would recommend.
 - Invite special speakers or guest experts to present at meetings. (Topics don't always have to be about school.) Invite neighbouring schools and other members of the community to attend.
 - Invite students to present on specific topics.
 - Make meetings fun; provide food and allow time for socializing.
 - Keep red tape to a minimum and focus more on supporting student learning and less on administrative details.

⁴ Peel District School Board, July 2005, <http://www.peel.edu.on.ca/councils/guides/guides.htm>

Appendix J: Checklist for School Council Meetings⁵

Before the meeting

- Book a meeting room.
- Order refreshments.
- Prepare an agenda. Put items on the agenda, in order of priority.
- Circulate the agenda.
- Check the room arrangements and audiovisual equipment.
- Ensure appropriate handouts or other materials are available.

At the beginning of the meeting

- Call the meeting to order at the designated time.
- Be certain there is a secretary present to record the minutes.
- Welcome everyone.
- State the purpose of the meeting.
- Review and agree on the agenda.
- Estimate the amount of time to be spent on each item.

During the meeting

- Keep the group focused on its purpose.
- Monitor the discussion so that everyone has a chance to speak.
- Clarify and summarize the discussions, when appropriate.
- Assist the group to use appropriate procedures for decision making and resolving conflict.
- Facilitate discussion to bring out all sides of an issue.
- Move the group toward decisions.
- Check for consensus.

At the end of the meeting

- Make sure action plans, agreements, commitments and responsibilities are clear.
- Announce the date, time and place of the next meeting.
- Identify the purpose of the next meeting and any items that will be on the agenda.
- Adjourn the meeting.

After the meeting

- Check with the secretary to be sure that the minutes are clear before distributing them to members.
- Help others carry out the decisions made during the meeting.
- Ensure minutes are placed in a publicly available place.

⁵ adapted from Peel District School Board, July 2005,
<http://www.peel.edu.on.ca/councils/guides/guides.htm>

Appendix K: Planning Committee

“School councils participating in their own planning process to ensure they are purposeful, focused and effective”⁶ is a meaningful contribution to the school community. The planning process starts with the creation of a school council three-year plan, which provides the framework for the school council’s achievements throughout the year. Depending on the school environment, the size of the school council and the skills of its members, it may be advisable to form a committee to create this plan.

The work of the planning committee is outlined as follows:

- Review existing three-year plans for the jurisdiction, school and school council.
- Research the needs and interests of the school and school community.
- Draft goals for the school council.
- Take the goals to the school council for endorsement.
- Draft strategies to achieve the endorsed goals (i.e., create the plan).
- Take the plan to school council for endorsement.

Once the work of the committee is complete, the plan is passed to the school council for implementation.

Tips for Recruiting Committee Members

To increase attendance and/or participation in committee meetings, consider some or all of the following:

- Ensure the committee chair understands and can convey the role of the committee to members.
- Ensure the committee members understand how the committee contributes to the school’s mission.
- Strive to invite and welcome representatives from all cultural groups that make up the diversity of the school.
- Have ground rules that support participation and attendance. Revisit the ground rules at every meeting and post them on the bottom of agendas.
- Attempt to provide individual assignments to the committee members.
- Have at least one member of the school staff participate in the committee to provide administrative support and information.
- Generate minutes for each committee meeting to get closure on items and help members comprehend the progress made by the committee.

Reporting

- Committees are directly responsible to the school council.
- Committee reports should be included as agenda items for school council meetings. The committee chair usually presents a report.
- Specific recommendations should be listed at the end of the report.
- It is essential to be concise - the time saved by referring the business to a committee may be negligible.
- The report should clearly indicate that full discussion was held and all options considered.

⁶ *Kaleidoscope Consulting, Alberta School Council Effectiveness: Summary and Findings of the Provincial Consultation*

Appendix L: School Council Checkup

Advising, Planning and Reporting

- Review provincial achievement test/diploma exam results with the principal.
 - Discuss the pros and cons of achievement tests/diploma exams and how they relate to the school.
 - Be aware of how the school uses these tests to improve student achievement.
- Provide input into school's long and short-term education plans. Does the plan still reflect the needs of the school community? Does the plan align with the jurisdiction's priorities?
- Review the school's annual results report.
- Are there areas where the school council can help the school achieve its goals?
- Talk about general school policies and programs. Examples could include discipline or dress code.
- Look at the school's success in meeting its education plan. Celebrate successes.
- Have discussions about the school implementing new or existing programs (e.g., curriculum emphasis, offering of options, such as drama, music, languages).
- Have discussions on the in-service needs of the school's parents and other school council members (e.g., school council development workshops).
- Identify future challenges.

Communication and Public Relations

- Involve the whole learning community in important decisions (e.g., public meetings, forums, surveys, community bulletin boards, school Web site).
- Provide the parent perspective in the school newsletter (e.g., volunteer news, calendar of meetings, articles).
- Support parents and teachers working in partnership to enhance student learning (e.g., classroom newsletters, homework posted on Web site, classroom meetings, student agendas/planners).
- Share information with other school councils in your jurisdiction (e.g., Council of School Councils, Family of Schools).
- Network with other school councils and provincial organizations through AHSCA membership, resolutions submissions and AHSCA's Annual Parent Conference.
- Provide time for committee, regional and provincial AHSCA reports at school council meetings.

Adapted from: Parent/Principal/Trustee Team from Seven Persons School, The Parent/School Council Gift, prepared in cooperation with the Northwest Regional Learning Consortium, 2004 and School Council Participation Quiz, AHSCA's September 2004 newsletter.

Appendix M: Sample School Council Three-year Plan⁷

DRAFT: HARRY BALFOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL THREE-YEAR PLAN 2003 – 2006

Harry Balfour School Council Goals/Strategies

Goal #1 Maintain communication between Harry Balfour School Council and Peace Wapiti Academy School Council.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Maintain a formal liaison position between Harry Balfour and Peace Wapiti Academy School Councils.	Maintain	Maintain	Maintain
Goal #2 Strive to communicate effectively with education partners.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Encourage trustees to attend school council meetings.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Increase teachers' understanding of school council roles and activities.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Maintain membership in Alberta Home and School Councils' Association.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Communicate concerns and provide input directly to Alberta Home and School Councils' Association.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Promote attendance by Harry Balfour school council representatives at Alberta Home and School Councils' Association's annual conference and annual general meeting.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Participate in meetings of Peace Wapiti School Board and school councils.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Respond to initiatives directed by Alberta Education.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Respond to initiatives directed by the Alberta Government.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Goal #3 Maintain involvement in efforts to provide safe, healthy and appropriate instructional space for all students.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Continue to lobby for additional space for the provision of a third computer lab, the reintroduction of an appropriate art facility and other space, as required.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Support efforts to develop a playground to meet 1998 guidelines. (Phase III – grades K to 3, east side of bus lane).	Implement	Complete	Delete

⁷ With gratitude to Harry Balfour School Council and principal, Rodney Lee. (Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76)

Goal #4 Maintain effective two-way communication between Harry Balfour School staff and school council.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Grade representatives communicate with respective staff members and provide feedback to school council.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Use the school council staff representative as the direct liaison between school council and staff.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Staff representatives provide a synopsis of school council meetings at staff meetings.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Invite staff members to school council meetings as guest speakers.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Goal #5 As school council members, educate ourselves in order to aid in making <i>informed</i> school-based decisions.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Access background information, as necessary, to fulfill our mandate as an advisory body to the principal as well as to central office and Peace Wapiti School Board trustees.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Promote attendance by representatives of Harry Balfour school council at Alberta Home and School Councils' Association annual conference and general meeting.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Obtain and circulate information and input from all education partners (as outlined in Goal #2).	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Take advantage of education opportunities, such as those offered through the Northwest Regional Learning Consortium.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Review roles of the school council and each individual position, as necessary, to ensure full understanding by each council member.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Goal #6 Take a leadership role in the education of fellow Harry Balfour parents, regarding issues affecting our children and our school.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Promote parent involvement in education, including sessions presented through the Northwest Regional Learning Consortium.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Disseminate information, in a timely manner, and initiate appropriate action to issues that arise.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Establish a communication committee to take responsibility for activities, such as advertising, membership list, e-mail, school council brochure and bulletin board maintenance.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Goal #7 Encourage more parent involvement in school council.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Advertise that all meetings are open and all parents are welcome.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Advertise school council meetings by way of newsletters, signs and word of mouth.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Promote school council through special events, such as tables at parent teacher interviews and open houses.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Establish a communication committee to take responsibility for advertising, membership list, e-mail, school council brochure and bulletin board maintenance.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Identify opportunities to inform parents about the opportunity to be involved with Harry Balfour school council (i.e., Grade 1 parent metra meeting).	Implement	Maintain	Ongoing
Goal #8 Establish strategies and procedures to ensure continuing effective and efficient operation of school council.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Develop a School Council Operations Manual that contains:			
1) guidelines for successful meeting format	Update	Update	Update
2) sample agendas for one full school year	Update	Update	Update
3) time lines for pertinent events that may arise	Update	Update	Update
4) role descriptions for each position on school council	Complete	Delete	_____
5) other items deemed necessary.	Implement	Update	Update
Goal #9 Support Harry Balfour School staff in ongoing efforts to provide a safe and caring environment.	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Strategies Promote parent education opportunities.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Support staff education opportunities.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing
Advise principal on issues of concern within the school community with respect to maintenance of a SAFE and CARING school environment.	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

Sample School Council Plan

Goal #2 from Provincial Government

Excellence in Learner Outcomes

Strategies	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007
Parent workshops on the new social studies program of studies, including "How can we help?" segments.	Plan and Implement	Implement	Review
Parent workshop on the resources and support materials for the new social studies program. Emphasis on children's literature (that can be used at home) to support each topic.	Plan	Implement	Review
Parent workshop on studies assessment and evaluation techniques including rubrics, learning logs and reports.		Plan	Implement

Appendix N: Effective Fundraising Practices

Fundraising activities are voluntary. No one, including parents, students or staff, should be obligated. Whether you are a school council contemplating a fundraising event or a fundraising society involved in major initiatives, it is wise to consider the following points:

- Before starting, check with school and local school board/charter board policy on fundraising.
- Be clear on the purpose of fundraising.
- Once the group has determined the reason for fundraising, make sure everyone involved understands the purpose.
 - Publish your goal(s) for fundraising in the school newsletter, on the school Web site and in a memo that students take home. You may even wish to write a small article for a local paper, take out an ad or ask a reporter to include your fundraising target in an article about the school, school council or society.
- Always ensure your group records and accounts for the proceeds of the fundraising efforts.
 - Funds raised by the school council become the property of the school community, are categorized as school-generated funds and should be included as part of the school's annual financial report to the school board. The school board reports on all school-generated funds in its Annual Education Results Report (AERR) and Audited Financial Statement (AFS), which are public accountability documents required by Alberta Education for all school jurisdictions in the province.
 - Funds raised by societies belong to the society's membership. The society is expected to report to its members on the amounts raised and how they were expended.
 - Accounting by a school council or fundraising society must be in accordance with the governing legislation.
- When reporting, give too much information.
 - In your report, disclose the purpose (i.e., goal), the process (i.e., method of gathering the funds), the end result (i.e., amount of money raised) and the application (Did all the funds go to the stated purpose? Was some held for administrative or other costs?) It is always prudent to be completely transparent so all can see what was planned, undertaken, accomplished and reported – in other words, account for exactly how much was raised and how the money was used.

Appendix O: Sample Contact Permission Form⁸

SAMPLE FORM

Permission for School Council Volunteers to Contact Other School Community Members Directly

If a school council chooses to collect, use or disclose any personal information of members of the school community, the school council must follow rules from the *Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)*.

It is important to be aware that sending a letter home may not always be the most efficient communication practice to use, especially with people whose knowledge or use of written English language is limited. Strive to find alternate means of communication, such as personal contact.

If personal contact information, such as names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses, is used by school council members (except for school staff), school council must obtain consent to collect, use or disclose that information. The information can only be used for the purpose for which it was collected and an individual may choose to take back his or her consent by informing school council in writing.

To permit members of your school council to be able to contact you directly, please complete this form and return it to the school office.

As a parent/guardian of a student attending this school, I give consent for representatives from the school council to contact me for the purposes of information and input regarding school council business/activities. I understand that I have the right to cancel my consent in the future.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

For any questions about the collection of your information, please contact the school office.
Your contact information will be kept confidential and made available only to members acting on behalf of the school council.

⁸ Adapted from a form used in Edmonton Public Schools.

Appendix P: Privacy Legislation

Information on Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) and Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA)

These acts in their respective ways, govern an individual's right of access to records and how personal information is collected, used and disclosed in school communities. FOIP applies to "public bodies" as defined in the FOIP Act and captures school boards and their employees. PIPA applies to "organizations" as defined in that statute and captures school councils and fundraising societies.

FOIP – This law came into force for the K-12 education sector in 1998. In school jurisdictions, this Act gives individuals a right of access to records that are in the custody or under the control of a school board or charter school. This right is not absolute but is subject to limited and specific exceptions set out in the Act. It also provides the underlying principles when it comes to how a school board collects, uses and discloses personal information of students, parents, employees, staff.

PIPA – This became law on January 1, 2004. The purpose of the Act is to protect individual privacy by requiring private sector organizations to obtain consent for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information. It also provides individuals with a right of access to their own personal information, unlike the FOIP Act it does not provide a general right of access to records held by an organization.

Recommendations for School Councils in Relation to PIPA:

- Each year, designate a person responsible for responding to questions about the use of personal information by school council; e.g., school council vice-chair, principal.
- Review school council's PIPA Policy.
- Obtain consent to collect, use and/or disclose personal information from parents, students, school council volunteers or other persons from the broader school community.
- Collect only the essential personal information required to fulfill its role in the school.
- State the purpose for and intended use of personal information when consent is sought.
- Use personal information only for the purpose stated when it was collected, unless consent is obtained for an alternative use.
- Ensure that all personal information is protected from unauthorized access and destroyed safely once it is no longer needed.

Appendix Q: Personal Information Protection Act - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

As of November 2004

Draft developed jointly by Government Services and Alberta Education.

Further information regarding the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) is available at:

<http://www.psp.gov.ab.ca/>.

Information regarding FOIP is available at:

http://www3.gov.ab.ca/foip/guidelines_practices/index.cfm.

1. Is a school council an organization under PIPA?

A school council, as established under section 22 of the *School Act*, is an unincorporated association and, as such, is an organization under PIPA (section 1(i)(ii)). School councils are not subject to Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP).

2. Is a school council considered to be a non-profit organization under PIPA?

No. School councils, as established under section 22 of the *School Act*, do not meet the definition of a non-profit organization under PIPA. However, school councils are expected to comply with all the provisions in PIPA.

3. What are a school council's responsibilities under PIPA?

PIPA sets out requirements for how organizations may collect, use and disclose personal information. The *Guide for Businesses and Organizations on the Personal Information Protection Act* is available to help organizations understand PIPA. School councils need to designate someone to be the contact person for any questions that may be received about the school council's handling of personal information. School councils should also develop a privacy policy. The Alberta Home and School Councils' Association is currently writing a sample privacy policy that school councils could adopt. Please see *A Summary for Organizations* for a more complete description of an organization's key obligations under PIPA.

4. Can a school council collect parents' contact information, such as name, address and phone number?

A school council can collect personal information directly from the parent. The school council would provide the parent with notice of the purpose for collecting the information (e.g., to communicate with parent about upcoming meetings or school events) and obtain consent. It is important that the notice cover all the intended uses and disclosures of the information.

5. Can a school provide parents' contact information to the school council?

Schools are required to comply with the FOIP Act. A school can provide the information in one of two ways. A school may obtain consent to disclose personal information from its records or it can facilitate the collection of the personal information by the school council directly from parents;

In the first approach, the school provides the personal information after obtaining consent. Schools normally collect the parents' contact information as part of the student registration process. A school can ask the parent to consent to the school providing his

or her contact information to the school council or the school fundraising society. A sample form for this purpose is available in the publication, *Using and Disclosing Personal Information in School Jurisdictions*.

Alternatively, a school council can develop a form requesting this information from the parents. The school would provide the form to parents and the school would collect and forward the completed forms directly to the school council.

6. Can a school distribute notices and newsletters from the school council for students to take home to parents?

This is up to the school. There is no personal information exchanged in this process so privacy is not a concern.

7. If a school board receives a FOIP request for copies of school council minutes, can the school board transfer the request to the school council?

No. Under the *School Councils Regulation A.R 171/98* as amended, a copy of the minutes of each meeting must be retained at the school and made available to the school board on request. Since the board has the minutes, the board must process the request under the FOIP Act. Also, a board cannot transfer a FOIP request to an organization that is not subject to the FOIP Act.

8. Could an individual make a request under PIPA to the school council for the minutes?

Under PIPA, an individual can only make a request to access his or her personal information. The Act could only be used to obtain minutes containing that individual's personal information. A request cannot be made under PIPA for school council minutes generally. The school council could release these minutes according to its own policies and procedures.

9. Is a school fundraising society an organization under PIPA?

Yes. A school fundraising society is a corporation and, as such, is an organization as defined under PIPA (section 1(i)(i)). Further, societies are identified as non-profit organizations under PIPA (section 56 (b)) . The Act applies, on a limited basis, to these non-profit organizations. For societies (i.e., non-profit organizations), the Act only applies to personal information that is collected, used or disclosed as part of a commercial activity. Fundraising is not considered a commercial activity.

10. What are a school fundraising society's responsibilities under PIPA?

As a non-profit organization under PIPA, a society does not need to follow PIPA unless it collects, uses or discloses personal information as part of a commercial activity. Most school fundraising societies will not have to implement PIPA.

11. Can a school fundraising society collect parents' contact information, such as name, address and phone number?

The society can collect personal information directly from the parent or indirectly from another source. In practice, the society may want to follow the same consent process adopted by the school council. This will enable the school council to collect personal information from the society, in accordance with PIPA.

12. Can a school provide parents' contact information to the school fundraising society?

Schools are required to comply with the FOIP Act. A school can provide the information in one of two ways. A school may obtain consent to disclose personal information from its records or it can facilitate the collection of the personal information by the society directly from parents.

In the first approach, the school provides the personal information after obtaining consent. Schools normally collect the parents' contact information as part of the student registration process. A school can ask the parent to consent to the school providing his or her contact information to the school council or the school fundraising society. A sample form for this purpose is available in the publication entitled *Using and Disclosing Personal Information in School Jurisdictions*.

Alternatively, a society can develop a form requesting this information from the parents. The school would provide the form to parents and the school would collect and forward the completed forms directly to the society. (See sample in Appendix O.)

13. Can a school distribute notices and newsletters from the school fundraising society for students to take home to parents?

This is up to the school. There is no personal information exchanged in this process so privacy is not a concern.

14. Could an individual make a request under PIPA to the school fundraising society for minutes of its meetings?

No. PIPA would not apply to personal information in the society's minutes. The minutes may be available under procedures set out in the *Societies Act*.

Appendix R: Glossary and References

Accountability	An obligation to answer for the execution of one's assigned responsibilities
Action Plan	Specifies the tasks required to be done, the person required for the task, the target completion date and sign off date
Advising	Information offered as an opinion or recommendation about future action or counsel
Advocacy	Support or argument for a cause or policy
AGM	Annual General Meeting
Alternative Program	A program that emphasizes a particular language, culture, religion or subject-matter or uses a particular teaching philosophy – but not a special education program and not a religious education program provided by a separate school board
Authorized Resources	Materials that have been approved by the Ministry of Education as appropriate to support the mandated curriculum
Beliefs	A body of convictions commonly held by a school community or and individual
By-law	A law or rule governing the internal affairs of a school council or other organization
Charter School	A school operated by a society incorporated under the <i>Societies Act</i> or a company registered under Part 9 of the <i>Companies Act</i>
Code of Ethics	A guide to behaviour of a high moral standard
Collaboration	Working together toward common goals
Cohort	A group of persons with a common demographic or statistical characteristic
Community Representative	A member of the community or a representative of a business that has a link with the school
Consensus	A decision-making process that finds the highest level of agreement amongst a number of participants

Consultation	A discussion where participants share their individual opinions or perspectives on a topic(s)
Curriculum	All the courses of study offered by an educational institution
Curriculum Handbook for Parents	Alberta Education handbooks for parents that provide curriculum summaries and information on subjects, programs and courses available in Alberta schools; updated every year
Dual Track School	A school that has one or more alternative programs
Education Partners	People who share an interest and concern and work together to achieve a common purpose in education
Enhanced Opportunity Programs	Project funds provided to school boards to cover costs of special programs and service in schools where sizable numbers of students are economically or socially disadvantaged
Financial Plan	A revenue and expenditure summary and a description of how resources will be used to address priorities and implement the education plan
FOIP	Alberta's 'Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act' gives individuals a right of access to records that are in the custody or under the control of a school board or charter board, subject to limited and specific exceptions set out in the Act.
Funding Framework	The guidelines for allocation of funds to public and separate school boards in Alberta (allocated in three blocks: instruction, support and capital)
Gifted and Talented	Designation of a category of special need student
Grade Level Achievement	The grade of curriculum a student has mastered
Governance	The act of establishing and monitoring the long-term direction of an organization through policy
Jurisdiction	School board or charter school board
Legislation	A proposed or enacted law or group of laws
Liability	Liability is the responsibility of one person to another, enforceable in law

Lobby Group	A group of persons engaged in trying to influence legislators or other public officials in favour of a specific cause
Mild, Moderate, Severe	Designation of a category of student with special needs
Mission and Mandate	A statement of the organization's educational purpose with a focus on students
PIPA	Alberta's Personal Information and Protection Act - The purpose of this act is to protect individual privacy by requiring private sector organizations to obtain consent for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.
Policy	A consistent course of action demonstrated through a stream of decision making
Program of Choice	A program chosen by parents, such as home education or outreach education
School based Decision Making	A process that involves the whole school community through which major decisions are made at the school level about policies, instructional programs and services and how funds are allocated to support them
School Community	Students enrolled in the school and their parents, children enrolled in an ECS program at the school and their parents, the school staff and other persons who have an interest in the school
School Council	A collective association of parents, teachers, secondary students, principals, staff and community representative(s) who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning – mandated under Section 22 of the <i>School Act</i>
Society	Five or more people who share a common recreational, cultural, scientific or charitable interest (a society may not incorporate primarily to carry on a trade or business)
Three-year Ed Plan	A three-year education plan, updated annually, developed by both the school and school jurisdiction.
Trustee	In accordance with the <i>School Act</i> , a member of a board, as defined as a board of trustees of a district or division
Value	A basic belief held by an individual

Education Acronyms

AB ED	Alberta Education
ACSTA	Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association
ACYI	Alberta Children and Youth Initiative
AHSCA	Alberta Home and School Councils' Association
AISI	Alberta Initiative for School Improvement
ASBA	Alberta School Boards Association
AERR	Annual Education Results Report
ASBOA	Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
ATA	The Alberta Teachers' Association
CALM	Career and Life Management
CASS	College of Alberta School Superintendents
CEU	Credit Enrolment Unit
CHSF	Canadian Home and School Federation
CPF	Canadian Parents for French
COATS	Council on Alberta Teaching Standards
COSC	Council of School Councils
CTS	Career and Technology Studies
DIPs	Diploma Examinations
ECS	Early Childhood Services
ESL	English as a Second Language
FNMI	First Nations, Métis, Inuit
FOIP	Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
FPFA	Fédération des parents francophones de l'Alberta
FSL	French as a Second Language

IOP	Integrated Occupational Programming (now Knowledge and Employability Courses)
IPP	Individualized Program Plan
LRC	Learning Resources Centre
PATS	Provincial Achievement Tests
PD	Professional Development
PLC	Parent Link Centre or Professional Learning Community
PSBAA	Public School Boards Association of Alberta
PUF	Per Unit Funding
SBDM	School-based Decision Making
SHIP	Student Health Initiative Program

Additional Resources

Alberta Home and School Councils' Association

Provides resources, including school council development program and advocacy services for Alberta School Councils.

www.ahsca.ab.ca

www.ahsca.ab.ca/scdp/scd.htm

Alberta Education

Provides information for parents, students and educators as well as contact information for school boards and schools throughout Alberta.

<http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/>

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia

Promotes student learning and achievement, school improvement and parental involvement in education by providing professional development services at the local, regional and provincial levels.

www.arpdc.ab.ca/index.html

Alberta Teachers' Association

Provides additional information for parents.

www.teachers.ab.ca/Resources+For/Parents/

A Principal's Guide to Working Effectively with Your School Council

Provides suggestions for working effectively and collaboratively with school councils.

www.teachingquality.ab.ca/resources/PrGuideSchCouncils.pdf

Alberta Learning Information Service

Offers career planning, learning and employment resources.

www.alis.gov.ab.ca/main.asp

LearnAlberta.ca

Provides learning resources for Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 community.

www.learnalberta.ca/login.aspx

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