

DATE: April 10, 2012

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Sarah Hoffman, Chair, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee Dave Colburn, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee Cheryl Johner, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee

SUBJECT: Feedback on Proposed ASBA Key Issues Process

RESOURCE STAFF: Anne Sherwood

ISSUE

The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) requested school boards to provide feedback on a draft Key Issues Approach (Attachment I) which would enable the ASBA Board of Directors to advocate and speak on behalf of the Association on topics that are not addressed in current policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board recommend to the ASBA Board of Directors that the proposed structure for the Key Issues Approach include:

- 1. A consultation and vetting process with school boards to determine the breadth of perspectives and, where possible the prevailing/majority view on an identified key issue;**
- 2. Referral of the key issue to the policy development process, as appropriate, with a draft policy being brought to the next available ASBA general meeting for consideration of the Association membership.**

BACKGROUND

The ASBA Political Advisory Task Force believes the Association's advocacy efforts would be strengthened by giving the ASBA Board of Directors the leeway to address issues as they arise that are currently not addressed in Association policy. The rationale and outline of a possible structure for the identification of key issues is provided in Attachment I. Boards have been asked to consider the approach and provide feedback and suggestions on the process.

RELATED FACTS

N/A

CONSIDERATIONS & ANALYSIS

The Board's ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee reviewed the draft Key Issues Approach. The Committee supports giving some latitude to the Board of Directors in initiating discussion among the membership on important key issues to enable the ASBA to respond and comment publicly on issues even when there is no guiding ASBA policy. However, the Committee believes that it is not appropriate for the ASBA to put forward a position on an issue without an Association policy or some other means of determining the prevailing views of the membership. Therefore the committee recommends the draft "possible structure" include a step for consultation with the membership prior to the advocacy plan.

In accordance with current ASBA Board of Director's Governance Policy 23-3.1.2, the ASBA Board of Directors is responsible for adopting "interim Association policy between general meetings, as and when required". The proposed process on key issues, although designed to enable Association advocacy is analogous to and directly related to policy development in that it proposes to engage the membership and stakeholders to ascertain views on key issues as they arise. The Committee recommends that policy development on key issues identified be undertaken concurrently with the key issues approach.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to the Board's approval of the recommendations, a letter will be sent to the ASBA Board of Directors advising them of the Board's recommendations with respect to the draft Key Issues Approach.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I - Draft Key Issues Approach

AS:

KEY ISSUES APPROACH (DRAFT)

Draft for consideration by Zones/boards

November 27, 2011

While the ASBA should continue advocating for association policies, the ASBA Political Advocacy Task Force believes the association's advocacy efforts would be strengthened by giving the ASBA Board of Directors the leeway to address issues beyond the constraint of the policy handbook.

Current top-of-mind issues for which the ASBA doesn't have policy – and is hence not as active in the discussion as it could or should be are:

- Debate about how much time Alberta students should spend in class
- Supports for sexual minority students
- Full day Kindergarten
- Student obesity

Without association policy, the ASBA's voice – and by extension school boards' voices – are not heard in these important debates. The Political Advocacy Task Force proposes introducing a structure that would free the ASBA to marshal its advocacy tools on issues not addressed in association policy. These tools include:

- Gathering and sharing information
- Initiating discussion among school boards and Zones
- Engaging stakeholders in discussion
- Commenting publicly on the issue

We believe this would:

- Make the ASBA more nimble in its advocacy efforts and responses to emerging issues
- Make the ASBA more proactive and current
- Earn the ASBA the reputation as the go-to source for information and perspective(s) on education issues

School boards must be involved in developing the structure to achieve this goal

We believe the key to making these changes will be to seek and secure school boards' acceptance for this proposal. While we are proposing a draft structure, our central recommendation is to explain the challenge to school boards and to involve them in developing a solution.

POSSIBLE STRUCTURE

Subject to discussion with school boards

- a) **Two-year trial period**
- b) **Board of Directors identify key issues**
Based on environmental scans – including but not limited to input from school boards; Zones; and association staff – the ASBA Board of Directors will identify non-policy based issues that would benefit from school boards' perspective. Upon identification of a key issue, the ASBA Board of Directors will advise school boards.
- c) **Criteria for key issues**
Outcome of issue(s) will affect students or school boards.
The issue(s) is not currently addressed in association policy.
Note: It is possible that there may not be an issue that meets the criteria
- d) **An advocacy plan will be developed with regard to key issue(s) as needed**
This plan will be shared with school boards.
- f) **Evaluation**
At the end of the two-year trial period, school boards will be asked to assess the value of this new approach to doing business.