

DATE: June 12, 2012
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Alberta School Councils' Association (Trustee Request # 204)
ORIGINATOR: David Fraser, Executive Director
RESOURCE STAFF: Janice Bell, Cheryl Oxford, Cory Sinclair
REFERENCE: May 22, 2012 Board Meeting (Trustee Shipka and Trustee Spencer)

ISSUE

The following information was requested:

- 1) Which school boards are members of the Alberta School Councils' Association?
- 2) What are the mechanisms for school councils to be involved in the governance of the Alberta School Councils' Association?
- 3) Would school councils require a separate membership or would the district's membership suffice?

BACKGROUND

At the May 10, 2012 public board meeting, the Board passed a motion to support school council membership in the Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) for a one-year free trial period. Membership was granted on a district-wide basis, meaning that all individual school councils had the opportunity to obtain free membership in the ASCA for the 2011-2012 school year.

On April 30, 2012, the ASCA sent all school divisions a letter offering a special rate of 50 per cent off the cost of district membership fees when a district committed to membership for a two year period.

On May 22, 2012, the Board approved purchasing a district membership in the ASCA for a two year period for a total cost of \$8000 using the Board Initiative Fund.

CURRENT SITUATION

ASCA confirmed the following with the Administration:

- 50 school boards in Alberta are part of the ASCA.
- District sponsorship (referred to as District membership in May 22, 2012 Board report) means the opportunity exists for each school council to access all ASCA services free of charge, vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), or run for a board of directors position, but they do not have to avail themselves of these opportunities if they don't care to.
- If some school councils chose not to participate in ASCA, the ASCA would honour that choice and no one would force a school council to participate.
- Examples of services available to parents through school councils could be workshops to enhance school council efficacy, (either already developed, or customized to meet the

needs of the council and school community) access to referral and advice on education related topics such as ‘how the K-12 system is funded,’ or ‘respectful relationship building’.

- Districts that sponsor the membership of their school councils in ASCA have access to additional services such as COSC (Council of School Councils) establishment and development and packaged or customized workshops for Trustees, administrators and other interested central office staff on school council interactions, efficacy and establishment. In addition, the ASCA has provided districts with trained facilitation staff to assist with the district initiated school council information evenings and sessions. A sponsoring district may access any of these services and others at no charge.
- In addition, Trustees and senior administration in sponsoring districts are able to attend ASCA functions and events at member rates.
- Non sponsoring districts would pay to access any of these services.
- School council parents can bring forward issue resolutions at the ASCA’s AGM through a robust process that evolves over a few months. When an issue is first forwarded to the ASCA office, they work with the sponsoring school council to ensure they have all the information they need to make informed choices about whether or not to continue to advance the resolution through the process. Also, the ASCA encourages councils to speak with their Trustees about the issue.
- Issue resolutions in draft are shared with all member councils so they can ask questions and seek clarification from the sponsoring council prior to the AGM. The sponsors have an opportunity to further refine/amend the resolution based on members’ input, then the final AGM package goes to all members well in advance of the AGM debate.
- A school board can work collaboratively with their school councils to advance issues through their respective organizations’ resolution processes. The ASCA has had instances where a resolution brought by school council at the AGM in the spring has been mirrored by a board sponsored resolution through the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA).

CO:cs