

# Annual School Improvement Planning: Setting the Direction

## Alberta Education's Ministry Business Plan:

- Aligns its business plan to the Government of Alberta's Strategic Business Plan and fiscal plans
- The [Alberta Education Business Plan 2022 - 2025](#) provides details on the following 4 education goals in Alberta
  - Alberta's students are successful
  - First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Alberta are successful
  - Alberta has excellent teachers, school leaders, and school authority leaders
  - Alberta's K-12 education system is well governed and managed
- Sets direction and focus for all divisions in the province
- Alberta Education goals have strategies and performance measures
- Alberta School Councils' Association is the vehicle for school council input at this level of planning

## School Board's Three-year Education Plan:

- Aligns their three-year plan with Alberta Education's Ministry Business Plan
- Sets direction and focus for all the schools in their divisions
- Includes schools' proposed Three-year Education Plans and budgets (mid January – early February)
- Accountability results

- Community Engagement opportunities



## School's Three-year Education Plan:

- Aligns the School's Three-year Education Plan with School Board's Three-year Education Plan
- Begins planning process with staff and School Council (late February – mid March)
- Considers 'identified priorities' and 'budget planning' documents from previous year
- Considers the year of the three-year term and the following:
  - Changes in school community demographics
  - Programming needs
  - School Authority (division/jurisdiction/board) focus and priorities
  - School Council input
  - Fiscal realities
  - Accountability results
  - Community Engagement Opportunities

## School Council's Three-year Plan:

- Aligns School Council's Three-year Plan with the School's Three-year Education Plan
- Begins planning process with staff and School Council (late February – mid March)
- Considers 'identified priorities' from previous year
- Community Engagement opportunities
- Considers the year of the three-year term and the results of School Council's Needs Assessment Survey to the school community.



# Changing the Focus of School Council Business

## Discussion Topics for School Council

- Review the Education Act, Section 55 and the *School Councils Regulation*. Discuss the “advisory” aspect of school council work with your principal.
- Register (or re-register) for ASCA’s School Council Engagement Task Force and participate in their surveys to use your School Council’s provincial ‘voice’.
- Consider submitting a proposed Advocacy Resolution to ASCA to address a provincial education issue. The proposed Advocacy Resolutions are discussed, debated and voted on by Member School Councils at ASCA’s AGM in April.
- Review the School Council’s operating procedures / bylaws / policies – Are they more than 5 years old and need refreshed? Are there references to handling funds or having a bank account? Are there references to fundraising? Is there a reference to a fundraising society? Consider amending the operating procedures to reflect your school division’s policies around parents handling money and/or fundraising. Ask ASCA for an easy to use template or book the *School Council Operating Procedures* workshop.
- Consider participating in the ASCA workshop: *Fundraising Associations Partnership Purpose*.
- If there is no fundraising association established in your school, discuss whether one should exist. This could be a committee project to research and recommend. Follow up by documenting the decision of the School Council in the Policy Manual.
- Review the school’s three-year education plan goals and strategies. With the principal, consider ways the School Council can support the plan with strategies to engage parents. Discuss with the principal ways School Council can be involved in shaping the school’s three-year plan.
- Considering participating in the *Effective Engagement in Your School Community* or *Tools for Effective School Councils* workshops.
- Review assessment results for your school. Ask your principal for an interpretation of the results.
- Review and discuss the school’s Results Report (AERR) and/or Accountability Pillar – ask how School Council can support improvement.
- Consider booking ASCA workshops or inviting guest speakers during the school year. What topics would be beneficial for your School Council this year? The ASCA Foundation and Enhancement Category workshops highlight School Council work related to advising and school improvement planning.
- Examine and plan for the activities which are necessary for the School Council to host or co-host during the year.



# School Council Annual Agenda Framework

*Creating an Annual Agenda or year-at-a-glance is an important step when planning School Council work for the year. A School Council would adapt the annual agenda to reflect their preferred level of engagement using this sample framework. A School Council would incorporate the activities and initiatives they decide to undertake for the year into the framework. For example, the planning for the School Council's involvement with a winter carnival may be an agenda item for the October/November meeting.*

Ed. Act 55(5): Items in black are activities that pertain to the operation of the school council.

ED. Act 55(4)(a) and (c): Items in blue are areas of parent engagement that will support Alberta Education's Assurance Framework. Processes, opportunities, and timing for participation will vary by School Division.

Leadership Quality Standard & Teaching Quality standard: Items in green relate to competencies identified in these Standards.

ASCA: Items in red relate to opportunities for member school councils.



## 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Year (September or October)

- Welcome and orientation of new School Council members
  - Overview of legislation, regulations, policy and School Council operating procedures (addressing governance and the decision-making model), meeting Rules of Order
  - Overview of the current school budget and the process for advising regarding the next school year's budget
  - Refer to ASCA's School Council Resource Guide and ASCA's website as information sources for School Councils and parents
- Review School Council plan (if there is one)
- Discuss ASCA's School Council Engagement Task Force (register or re-register for it on website)
- Principal shares key events of upcoming school year
- Principal and teacher outline areas School Council may be involved, or their advice will be solicited
- Review school community needs assessments results from June
- Discussion of what School Council members would like to work on during the school year and their expectations of the School Council and individual School Council members
- Determine which School Council members will be reps with other education stakeholders and organizations and committee assignments (if any)
- Distribute reading materials or website addresses for School Council members to prepare for discussion at the next meeting

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Year (October or November – possible Annual General Meeting)

- Elections of Executive, presentation of School Council report (from previous year)
- Update School Council contact information with ASCA
- Discussion of the Jurisdiction's Three-year Education Plan
- Discussion of the School's Three-year Education Plan
- Create or review and update a School Council plan

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Year (November or December)

- Receive highlights of the Division's and School's Results Report
- Discuss assessment practices and/or Diploma Exam Results
- Accountability Pillar information presented as it pertains to the school, when available
- Discuss and submit a provincial education issue to ASCA for consideration at the Annual General Meeting (Proposed Advocacy Resolution)
- Committee reports

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Year *(December or January)*

- Provide input for the next year's school budget (this may be an ongoing agenda item as needed)
- Provide input for the next year of the School's Three-year Education Plan (this may be an ongoing agenda item as needed)
- Committee reports

## 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Year *(January or February)*

- Alberta School Councils' Association's Conference and AGM registration
- Committee reports

## 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Year *(February or March)*

- Evaluation of any projects School Council is coordinating or involved in (this function is ongoing as projects are completed and reflecting the cycle of the projects undertaken)
- Discussion of ASCA Proposed Advocacy Resolutions

## 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Year *(March or April)*

- Recruitment Strategies and Succession Planning for next year
- Prepare needs assessment
- Discussion of ASCA Proposed Advocacy Resolutions; advise voting delegate

## 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Year *(May or June – possible Annual General Meeting)*

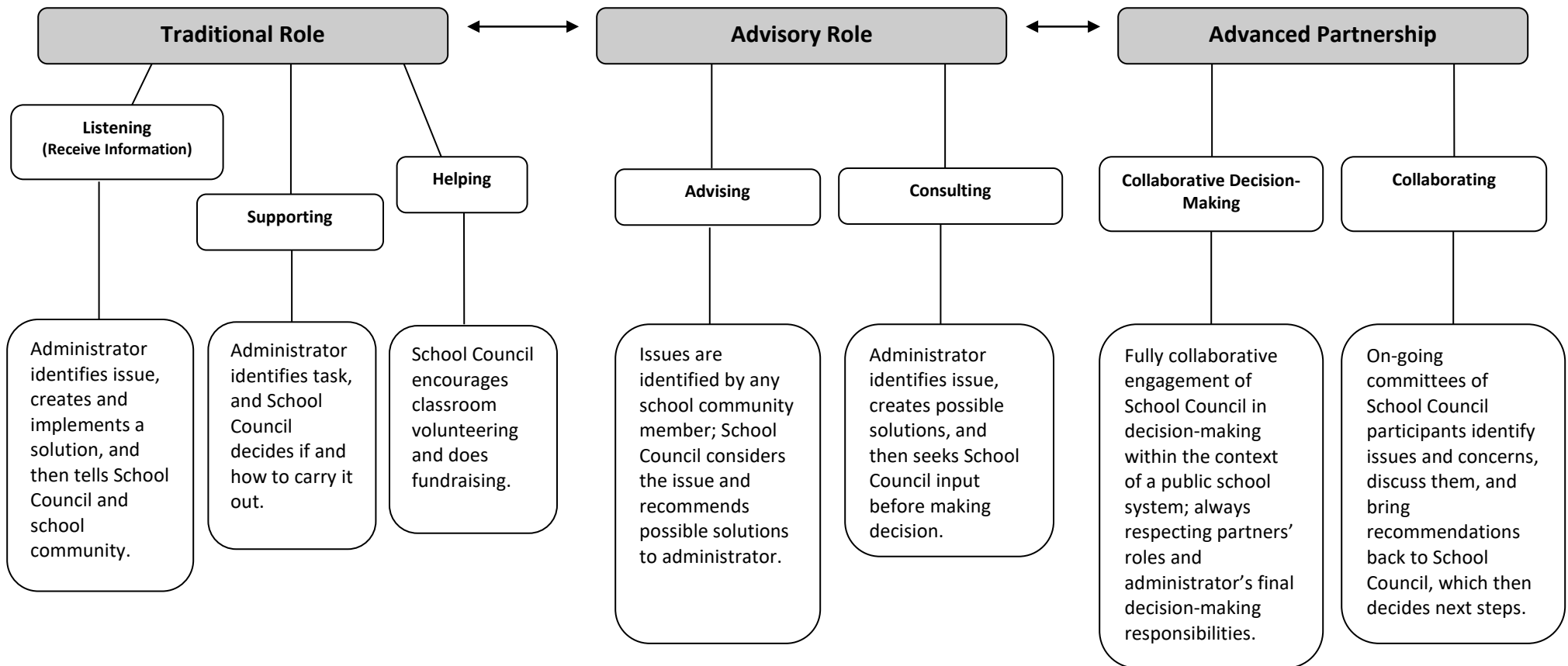
- Annual General Meeting (AGM) Planning (or being held)
- Share information from ASCA conference
- Renew Alberta School Councils' Association membership and other memberships pertinent to the School Council
- Needs Assessments sent to school community
- Celebrate your successes!!

At any School Council meeting during the year, Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) Members may decide to discuss and submit a provincial issue to ASCA for consideration at the Annual General Meeting. Please visit the ASCA website ([www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca](http://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca)) for more details.



## Types of Engagement for School Councils

*Alberta School Councils were mandated (1995) as forums to involve members of the school community in advising the principal and the board respecting matters related to the school, focusing on supporting and enhancing student achievement and participating in school improvement planning. Each year, a School Council will determine its own types of engagement, based on the people participating that year, their interests and ideas. The flowchart below may be used as a tool to determine if the current levels of engagement meet expectations of the school community, and specifically those serving on School Council. Such a discussion may also acknowledge the significant contributions made by past and current School Councils, as well as help to plan for future growth.*



# Joint Annual Planning: Collaboration = Student Success

Whether newly created or having been in existence for a period of time, School Councils (SCs) and/or Fundraising Associations (FRAs) sometimes find themselves struggling to figure out “what to do now” or having lost the drive for a particular direction they thought they were heading.

To help avoid this uncertainty of purpose, every year it is helpful to do some brainstorming with people at the same level of organizational structure...the leaders...just to get the ball rolling. Joint Annual Planning is a collaborative process and is flexible enough to allow for modification to suit individual school community cultures and needs.

## **How to start a Joint Annual Plan:**

### **The First Joint Meeting: Explore**

Organize a time when the SC Chair, the Principal and the FRA President (you could include the “vice’s” as well, if desired) can meet to explore some “organizational priorities” from each other’s perspectives. Avoid using this opportunity to make any decisions or commitments with respect to discussion topics, areas of emphasis, events, or funding; instead, use it as an “information gathering” session where each of you takes a turn to list organization-specific “supporting and enhancing student learning” points, complete with reasonable justification, that the respective members may feel are important to focus on. Examples may be: School community wide engagement and input on school or division policies, Whole-School Health, improving reading comprehension, emphasizing Digital Citizenship, upgrading physical activity equipment, or increasing successful transitions to post-secondary.

If possible, encourage everyone to think short and long term: what is on the horizon this year, next year, the year after that? Ensure that all participants know that this is not intended to be a debate, or an opportunity to “convince”, it is just a conversation. Each “leader” (Chair/Principal/ President) should commit to providing all the information shared/gathered to their audiences (SC Exec and members, school staff – and students if appropriate, FRA Exec and members) and asking for their thoughts, suggestions, feedback. (Even if one of them drops the ball, it is really important for you to keep your promises, and to follow through. This helps to establish the integrity of the SC or FRA and the sincerity of your leadership.)

At the next SC or FRA meeting, openly discuss the priorities identified by each group, and the rationale, and include the perspective of logistics (if we want to do this, do we have the time, energy, people to make this happen?) for each of the identified items. *It is really important to remind the group that they are not obligated to undertake anything which they don’t feel they can support either in principle or in manpower.* What they do need to do is identify which priorities/projects/items they can “get behind”.

### **The Second Joint Meeting: Develop**

With that completed, the people who originally met should get together again, and share their findings – what did each group decide they could support and devote their time/energies to? Again, including a timeline (this year, next year, etc.) for everyone is really important. Where are the commonalities? What priorities did all 3 of the groups agree upon in principle? Are there possibly some adjustments in time frame that may need occur to reach a compromise (i.e.: school cannot support something this year, but very happy to do so next year)?

In this setting, the SC Chair or the FRA President is the person who strives to find the middle ground...something that all parties can “live with”. They are not there to make decisions or promises; only to share what their members have said they can support, and to seek information to present back to members. The decisions to actually “mobilize” (start planning and executing the plans) have to come from the members and the people who will “do the work”. Ideally, the second meeting results in one mutually agreed upon priority (that each group will likely support) identified for each of the next three years. For a super enthusiastic, energetic group, there may be two priorities for each year.



# Joint Annual Planning: Collaboration = Student Success

## **Executing the Plan: Take Action**

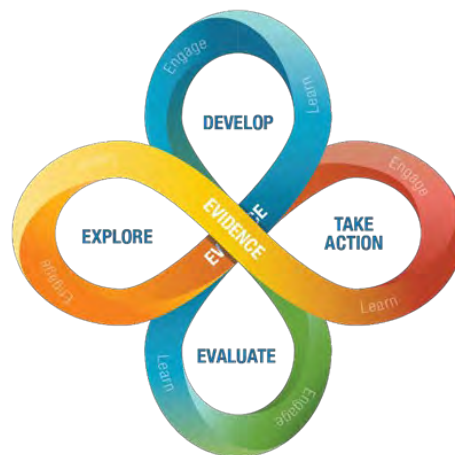
From there, the leaders and their respective “team” start the work needed to accomplish the goals, remembering to keep everyone (school community including Administration, potential funders, etc.) informed along the way as to where their support is needed, when their input will be crucial, and/or how their hard-earned money will be spent. For any fundraising initiative by any of the partners, it is vitally important to decide and communicate, ahead of time, where excess funds, if any, will go...will they be applied to the next item on the list or will they be applied to a major long-term project? This enables funders to make informed decisions, and not come back and accuse anyone of not being transparent.

## **Evaluate and Repeat the Process:**

Each year before school starts, the above process should be repeated. Include an opportunity to evaluate the actions of the previous year (successful, unsuccessful, completed, not started, etc.) in a non-critical, purely factual manner. It is also beneficial to include a quick report on “status to date” with respect to any multi-year plans (i.e.: the progress of the Wellness Committee, the number of students enrolled in post-secondary programs or funds acquired towards the playground) as well as confirming that what had previously been identified as priorities for the upcoming year are still “on the radar”. If there have been changes in the school community that result in something else being needed more urgently, or an original item is no longer relevant, modify the options for the upcoming year accordingly, and begin the process of seeking input from all members once again.

Consistently applying this process will decrease the chances of the School Council or Fundraising Association feeling lost or purposeless and may even attract more school community members to become actively engaged as they will know what to expect.

## ***The Assurance Framework Continuum***



## **Participant Annual Plans**

The one or two mutually agreed upon priority items identified for each year are not necessarily all that each group will work or focus on throughout the year. The School Council may choose some other areas in which to apply its energies (i.e.: advising on school policies), and the Fundraising Association may determine that they want to continue supporting something that was not on the “priority list” but know is still wanted and appreciated (i.e.: funding for field trips). The Principal will obviously continue to have staff and students focus on areas critical to student success. The intended outcome of a Joint Annual Plan is not that it is the only purpose, but that it is a common purpose worthy of everyone’s efforts.



## School Council Planning Chart

Goal	Specific Strategy	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Time Specific
Statement of <b>Action</b> or <b>Desired Outcome</b>	Has defined elements, is precise – 5 W's <b>Who</b> is involved? <b>What</b> is to be done? <b>Where</b> will this take place? <b>Why</b> should this be done? <b>When</b> should this be done?	<b>Evaluation:</b> What will determine the completion and/or success of this goal?	Is this within the <b>authority</b> and <b>resources</b> of the School Council to achieve? Which authority? What resources? Is help needed?	<b>How</b> does this goal endorse the School Council purpose: To support and enhance student learning?	What portion of this goal can be completed <b>during the term of office</b> of School Council (include dates)?
<b>SAMPLE</b>					
<i>To increase awareness of school council purpose and activities</i>	<i>*Strike a small committee to plan and organize *School council hosted information evenings on relevant topics 3 times during this year (e.g. speaker on bullying; keeping kids safe on the internet; revise curriculum) *Coordinate with school council meeting -- use school library or gym *Attract parents to school; and on to school council</i>	<i>Number of parents attending will increase; interest in topics; regular school council meeting attendance rises</i>	<i>With consultation and approval of Principal.  Could use free speakers – committee will investigate resources needed; ASCA could help with referrals.</i>	<i>Purpose: forum for parents to discuss and advise on relevant topics; engage more of the school community; communicate with parents on school council work; parents are more informed and able to support school goals and their children's learning</i>	<i>Pre-planning can be completed by June 2022; Goal could be entirely completed within the term of next SC: June 2023.  Info events in November, February and April or May.</i>





School Council Planning Chart

Goal	Specific Strategy	Measurable	Achievable	Realistic	Time Specific



# Effective School Council Checklist

## **Our School Council clearly understands the roles and responsibilities of council and its participants.**

- ☐ We are familiar with the Education Act and the *School Councils Regulation*.
- ☐ We use the Alberta School Council Resource Guide.
- ☐ We participate in workshops and other skill development and training opportunities.
- ☐ We are familiar with and regularly review our school council's operating procedures.
- ☐ We assess and evaluate our school council's work annually.

## **Our School Council focuses on supporting and enhancing student learning and sets priorities for student success and/or school improvement planning.**

- ☐ We understand how initiatives and policies of Alberta Education impact student learning in our school.
- ☐ We are knowledgeable about and advise on the school's education plan.
- ☐ We discuss strategies for School Council and parents to support the goals in the school's one-year/3-year plan.
- ☐ We understand the school's Accountability Pillar Report and Annual Results Report.
- ☐ We understand how our school's assessment practices and/or Diploma Exam results relate to school improvement planning.
- ☐ We advise on strategies for improving learning through interpretation of the Accountability Pillar, Annual Results Report and assessment results.

## **Our School Council promotes meaningful parental engagement. We are inclusive, respectful, demonstrate trust and have high ethical standards.**

- ☐ We communicate regularly with parents and the broader school community.
- ☐ We encourage participation on School Council and recognize and address barriers to participation.
- ☐ We welcome newcomers to the school and build positive, trusting relationships.
- ☐ We conduct efficient meetings and other activities with dignity and respect.
- ☐ We have implemented and adhere to our School Council's Code of Ethics.
- ☐ We strive to build positive relationships with our principal, our Trustee, other parent groups and community members.

