Trustee Handbook

September 2023

Fort Vermilion School Division

Our Children, Our Students, Our Future:
Moving the Dial on Every Child

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THE BOARD

The Board is the ultimate authority within the Fort Vermilion School Division's (FVSD) mandate, and its powers are limited by the *Education Act* and other pertinent legislation of the Government of the Province of Alberta.

Within its powers as a corporate body, the Board's job is to protect and direct the interests of FVSD. The Board delegates to the Superintendent/CEO discretionary powers. Further, it supports the Superintendent's/CEO's actions–exercised within these discretionary powers–and, in his absence from duty or through his delegation, the actions of his delegates. Normally, the Board will not interfere with, nor reverse, the decisions of the Superintendent/CEO or those of his delegates. The exception to this occurs when the Board believes that the decision made misrepresents or is in violation of Board policy.

The Board is the final authority in the settlement of any unresolved disputes. The Board delegates discretionary powers to the Superintendent/CEO to deal with individual situations or cases within the limits established by Board policy.

Board Governance

The Fort Vermilion Policy Model
During the 1998-1999 period, the Board of Trustees of FVSD developed and refined an integrated set of policy-based governance methods, grounded in John Carver's Governance™ model.

***Why* is more important than *How*:** FVSD's Policy Handbook was developed with an eye to policy-based governance. An essential element of the policies found in the handbook is that they *communicate the values and principles on which they are based,* and, because of this intentional focus, the staff of the division understand the motivation behind the policy and can act accordingly in determining implementation methods. By putting the values and principles front and centre, Board discussions can focus on an area where trustees, as representatives of the community, have special competence.

Policy Compliance Monitoring
The Board has a responsibility to judge how well its directives are being observed. The approach used is a combination of systematic reports presented to the Board and Board-directed monitoring.

Most of the Board meeting is taken up with the monitoring process. There is a condensed version of the monitoring schedule at the beginning of each Board agenda. As a trustee, you are monitoring the work of the Division to ensure that it is adhering to the Board's policies. For this reason, clarifying and probing questions are welcome and expected.

In addition to the monthly monitoring schedule, the Board may ask for a report on any aspect of the school division's operations. When a request for a report is made, the report is prepared by the appropriate staff and presented at the next month's meeting.

Monitoring by an outside agency may also happen. Outside-agency monitoring can be scheduled or unscheduled. The auditor's report is an example of scheduled monitoring. Inviting the RCMP Sergeant in charge of threats to schools to conduct a review of threats/threat assessment could be an example of unscheduled monitoring.

Determining Wards and Operation Guidelines

A ward system must represent all the citizens of our school division and be responsible to the electorate through the democratic process.

- Wards must be decided by representation by population with no one sector of the population having majority.
- Wards represent multiple groups of people living within the boundary.
- Wards have the best interest of all children at heart, without distinction as to who they are or what their background is.
- Wards consider the future welfare of all FVSD communities, and the quality of education provided within those communities.
- Wards operate in a spirit of respect and cooperation despite differences of opinion that may arise.
- Though they represent a specific ward, trustees make decisions in the best interest of the entire school division.

Role and Responsibility of a Trustee

As a Member of the Board

Section 8 of the Board Procedures Regulation states that:

1. All resolutions must be submitted to a board by the chair of the board or a trustee, and no seconder is required.
2. The chair of the board and every trustee present at a meeting of the board must vote for or against every question unless
    a. In a specific case, the chair or a trustee is excused by resolution of the board from voting, or
    b. The chair of the board or a trustee has a pecuniary interest in the matter and abstains from voting as required by section 88(1) of the Act.
3. The secretary of the board must, whenever a recorded vote is requested by a trustee, record in the minutes the name of each trustee present and whether the trustee voted for or against the matter.
4. Notwithstanding subsection (3), the secretary of the board must, immediately after a vote is taken and on the request of a trustee, record in the minutes the name of that trustee and whether that trustee voted for or against the matter or abstained.

Once the Board makes a decision, you must accept that decision and only attempt to change it through the appropriate procedures at legally constituted meetings. You have a responsibility to maintain objectivity and keep the long-term goals of the Board uppermost in the consideration of issues. Immediate goals may change, but the Board's ultimate purpose–to protect and direct–does not.

The Trustee as an Individual Trustee
Once elected as a trustee, your responsibility is to the electorate as a whole within the Board's jurisdiction.

You have a responsibility to convey Board decisions to the public and, as a Board member who was part of the decision, you must support that decision.

As an individual trustee, you have no legal power on your own. You must, however, recognize that public and employees may perceive residual powers. Knowing this, you must use wise judgment and discretion when engaging with others, making it clear the point of view from which you are speaking, i.e., as a trustee, as a Board member, or as an individual.

Trustees are governed by a code of ethics below.

For further information on the role of the Board, Chair, and other key stakeholders please refer to the Board Policies.

Trustee Code of Ethics

(Adopted at the Alberta School Boards Association's 1983 Annual Convention)

As a member of my local Board of Education, representing all the citizens of my community and responsible to the electorate through the democratic process, I recognize:

- That my fellow citizens have entrusted me, through the electoral process, with the educational development of the children and youth of the community.
- That trustees are the children's advocates and my first and greatest concern is the best interest of each and every one of these children without distinction as to who they are or what their background may be.
- That trustees are educational leaders who realize that the future welfare of the community, of the Province, and of Canada, depends in the largest measure upon the quality of education we provide in the public schools to fit the needs of every learner.
- That legally, the authority of the Board is derived from the Province which ultimately controls the organization and operation of the school district and which determines the degree of discretionary power left with the Board and the people of this community for the exercise of local autonomy.
- That I must never neglect my personal obligation to the community and my legal obligation to the Province, nor surrender these responsibilities to any other person, group, or organization but that, beyond these, I have a moral and civic obligation to the nation which can remain strong and free only so long as public schools in Canada are kept free and strong.

In view of the foregoing, I will:

- Devote time, thought and study to the duties of a school board member so that I may render effective and creditable service.
- Work with my fellow board members in a spirit of harmony and cooperation in spite of differences of opinion that arise during vigorous debate of points of issue.
- Consider information received from all sources and base my personal decision upon all available facts in every case, unswayed by partisan bias of any kind, and therefore, abide by and uphold the final majority decision of the board.
- Work together with my fellow board members to communicate to the electorate all the facts about their schools, to the end that they will readily provide the finest possible school program, school staff, and school facilities.
- Provide leadership to my community through setting goals and developing policies for the educational program and by regularly evaluating these in the light of the wishes and expectations of the community.
- Remember at all times that as an individual I have no legal authority outside the meeting of the board, and to conduct my relationships with the school staff, the community, and all media of communication on the basis of this fact.
- Resist every temptation and outside pressure to use my position as a school board member to benefit either myself or any other individual or agency apart from the total interest of the school jurisdiction.
- Recognize that the primary function of the board is to establish the policies by which the schools are to be administered, and that the administration of the educational program and conduct of school business shall be left to the employed superintendent of schools and his/her professional and non-professional staff.
- Encourage active cooperation by citizens, organizations, and the media in the district with respect to establishing policy on current school operations and proposed future developments.
- Support my provincial and national school board association for the future of trusteeship in this province and the nation.
- Provide to the best of my ability effective school board service to my community in a spirit of teamwork and devotion to public education as the greatest instrument for the preservation and perpetuation of our representative democracy.

Trustee Oath of Office

Section 75 of the *Education Act* states that every trustee shall take and subscribe to the official oath prescribed by the *Oaths of Office Act* before commencing their trustee's duties and deposit the oath with the secretary of the Board.

Oaths are administered at the first Organizational meeting following an election.

Selection of Chair & Vice-Chair

Section 1 of the *Education Act Board Procedures Regulation* states that at the organizational meeting, and afterwards at any time as determined by the Board, the Board must elect one of its members as chair and another as vice-chair to hold office and preside at Board meetings.

Commissioner for Oaths

The *Notaries and Commissioners Act* states that a trustee of a board of a school division within the meaning of section 125(4)(b) of the *Education Act* is a commissioner for oaths empowered by virtue of their office or status to administer oaths and take and receive affidavits, affirmations and declarations in Alberta for use in Alberta.

See the Board of Trustees SharePoint site for a copy of the *Notaries and Commissioners Act* and Information and Instructions for Commissioners for Oaths.

Supplies

The following supplies are available to trustees for use during their term and must be returned to Central Office upon resignation.

Equipment

- Communication Technology Device
- Commissioner for Oaths Stamp
- Purchasing Card

Informational Materials

- Board Policies
- *Education Act*
- Robert's Rules of Order
- Trustee Handbook

Additional supplies (e.g., paper, filing supplies, pencils and pens) may be requested from the Associate Superintendent of Finance's office.

Communication with the Public

Parent Complaints

Occasionally you will get a parent complaint about what is going on in a school. The usual process for dealing with complaints is:

1. Check to see if the parent has communicated with the child's teacher. If they have not, let them know this is their first step. If they have, and they are not satisfied;
2. Have they communicated with the principal? If they have not, ask them to reach out to the principal to discuss their concerns. If they have, and they are not satisfied, let the parent know their next option is;
3. They may appeal to Central Office and one of the Superintendents will work to resolve the complaint;
4. They may next appeal to the Board and ultimately;
5. They have the right to appeal to the Minister.

In a perfect world the above process works well and most problems should be, and are, solved at the classroom teacher or principal level. If a parent brings a concern to you, it is important that you listen to them and take their concern seriously. Sometimes it is a good idea to offer to help them get in touch with the involved staff members. Refer to section 2.6 of the Board Policies regarding trustee code of conduct.

It is important to follow up on what has been done to allay the parent concern. This can often be done informally through a short conversation with the principal involved. If that is not possible, check with one of the Superintendents at Central Office keeping in mind that if the problem has not come to this office, the Superintendent will have to check with the school which will take a little time. Another way to monitor the situation is to check back with the concerned parent.

BOARD MEETINGS

Committee of the Whole Meeting

Section 64(3) of the *Education Act* permits the holding of in-camera sessions of the Board. In-camera sessions are usually held prior to the regular Board meeting and may be necessary on emergent or other issues during the regular meeting. Going in-camera too often is discouraging because meetings are considered 'public'. The Board must come out-of-camera to make a vote on motions.

The following items may be considered at the in-camera portion of the meeting

- Matters pertaining to individuals or groups that may be readily identifiable.
- Salary negotiations or proposed changes in salary schedules.
- The purchase, sale, or rental of property.
- Discussion leading to awarding tenders or contracts (tenders shall be opened and awarded in public sessions)
- Items considered to be of a confidential nature as determined by the Board Chairman in consultation with the Superintendent of Schools.

Regular Board Meetings

The Board's objective is to encourage the general public to contribute to the educational process. To achieve this objective, Board affairs must be conducted in public to the greatest extent possible.

All regular meetings will be held in accordance with Board Procedures Regulation, Education Act. Provisions in the Education Act, as referenced in Board Policy will always take precedence.

Board Meeting Procedures

The Board of Trustees recognizes it is the right and duty of each member to be as fully informed as possible concerning matters on which the Board must act. In advance of Board meetings, if possible, each member will be provided with copies of letters, schedules, reports, maps, bulletins and the like related to the business to come before the Board.

The Superintendent must provide options on all agenda items where action is required (as per policy 3.6.6).

Agenda Format

The agenda will be developed according to the following format (Board Policy 2.8.4):

a. Call to Order
b. Focus on Student Achievement
c. Approval of Agenda
d. Approval of Minutes
e. Communications
f. Trustee Sharing on PD/Committees
g. Delegations or External Presentations
h. Monitoring Reports
i. Other Business
j. Adjournment

Agenda Distribution

The agenda will be reviewed by the Superintendent and Board Chair or designate prior to being released to the trustees. Agenda items may be submitted up to one week prior the meeting. Agendas will be sent out via email on the Friday before the meeting to allow trustees time to familiarize themselves with the agenda and its supporting documentation.

Agendas are also distributed to the ATA Representative and First Nation Bands.

Rules of Order

The Board conducts its meetings following Robert's Rules of Order and relies on the procedures outlined in it to handle resolutions.

Methods of Voting

Resolutions presented to the Board must be decided by a majority of votes of those present. All trustees present shall vote in favour or against the question, and those questions where there is a tie must be decided in the negative. Voting on the question must be taken by open vote unless, with respect to the election of a chair or vice-chair, one or more trustees request that the vote be by secret ballot.

Whenever a trustee requests a recorded vote, the secretary must record in the minutes the name of each trustee present and whether the trustee voted for or against the matter.

All resolutions must show the Board's disposition by recording, CARRIED, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY or DEFEATED immediately after the minute.

Minutes of the Board

The Board recognizes that the approved and signed record of the Board proceedings during a meeting constitute the minutes of the Board. This record must be available for public scrutiny in accordance with section 65(1) and (2) of the *Education Act* once the proper officials have signed subsequent to approval by the Board.

Once approved, the minutes of the Board are posted to the School Division website.

Public Participation at Board Meetings – Delegations

Application to meet with the Board must be made to the Superintendent/CEO or their designate one week before a Regular Board Meeting and must indicate the nature of the business to be discussed.

In consultation with the Chair of the Board, the Superintendent/CEO or their designate, must assign the delegation a specific presentation time on the agenda and advise the delegation accordingly.

The Board reserves decision on all matters pertaining to the delegation(s).

Press at Board Meetings

The Board recognizes that all meetings are open to the public, including members of the Press. The Press is free to observe any Board meeting, or part thereof, with the exception of committee sessions.

News Releases of the Board

From time-to-time, news releases will be made by the Board. The Superintendent/CEO may prepare news releases that are released under the name of the Chair of the Board; however, the Chair must be consulted with and be agreeable to the content and expression of the release.

Trustee Conflict of Interest

Part 4 - Division 5 of the *Education Act* deals with the issue of "conflict of interest" for trustees. Generally, a trustee is in a conflict of interest if they vote on a matter, or influence a decision on a matter, that can monetarily affect the trustee, their family, or any business in which they have an interest. This is defined in the *Education Act* as having a "pecuniary interest" (see section 85 of the *Education Act*).

Section 88 of the *Education Act* provides for a trustee to disclose to the School Board the conflict of interest, abstain from voting on any question relating to the matter and, in most circumstances, leave the room until the discussion and voting are concluded. It is important that you accept responsibility for identifying possible "conflicts of interest" as other trustees and administration may not be aware of your personal interests. If you are unsure, you should seek input from either the Superintendent/CEO or Associate Superintendent of Finance prior to the meeting. Either can provide guidance and/or obtain a legal opinion on the matter.

Disclosure of Information

Section 86(1) of the *Education Act* states that each trustee of a board shall file with the board's secretary a statement showing:

a) the names and employment information of the trustee and the trustee's spouse or adult interdependent partner,
b) the names of the corporations, partnerships, firms, governments or persons in which the trustee has a pecuniary interest, and
c) the names of the corporations, partnerships, firms, governments or persons in which the trustee's spouse or adult interdependent partner or children under 18 years of age have a pecuniary interest.

Trustee Attendance – Board Meetings

Section 87(1) of the *Education Act* provides reasons that a person is disqualified from remaining as a trustee of the board. Specifically, subsection (i) states:

> [If that person] is absent without being authorized by a resolution of the board from 3 consecutive regular meetings of the board, unless the person's absence is due to illness and the person provides evidence of that illness in the form of a medical certificate respecting the period of the person's absence.

Please communicate with the Associate Superintendent of Finance's office and/or the Board Chair if you are unable to attend a meeting. It is important that a quorum of the Board is available for all meetings and knowing in advance of your absence is very helpful.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Trustee Expense Reimbursements

The Board recognizes that you may incur out of pocket expenses in the course of exercising your responsibilities and the carrying out of your duties. In order to adequately compensated you for bona fide expenses, the following reimbursements apply:

1. All reimbursements must be established by the Board of Trustees at a minimum of once every two years.
2. To allow a trustee to fulfill their responsibilities, the Board currently pays the following general expenses:
   a. Access to an operable computer
   b. Access to email
   c. Access to software necessary to read attachments sent to them
   d. Access to the basic level of high-speed internet
3. Any purchases made of a personal nature (e.g., movies or entertainment) will not be reimbursed.
4. Claims for reimbursements should be submitted on a monthly basis.
5. Claims for expenses incurred in the previous year will not be honored after September 30th of the following fiscal year.
6. Claims, with attached receipts and other documentation, shall be submitted on Division forms.
7. Claims will not be processed until documentation is complete, inclusive of signature.

Allowance, Accommodation, Meals and Incidental Expenses

1. When you are required to travel on School Division business, and overnight accommodation away from your home is required, you are allowed to claim:
   a. Reimbursement for actual cost of accommodation on the production of a receipt or where no receipt is provided a claim of ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS ($100.00) may be made.
   b. The per diem allowance of SIXTY-FIVE DOLLARS ($65.00) for each full day of travel status with no requirements of receipts or a reasonable receipt amount.
2. When there is a partial day of travel, pursuant to subsection (1), you may claim meal allowances as set out below or a reasonable receipt amount:

Breakfast	$15.00
Lunch	$20.00
Dinner	$30.00

Transportation and Gratuities

1. It is acceptable to pay 10% gratuity rounded to the nearest whole dollar when paying for a meal while out on division business. In the event that the gratuity is automatically added to the bill (e.g., hotel room service) the acceptable amount will be what is automatically added to the bill.

2. When you are on Board approved travel, you may claim the following expenses, for which you must provide receipts:
    a. Air fare
    b. Automobile rental for division business
    c. Excess baggage charges where extra equipment is required because of the duties being performed
    d. Taxi fare to and from a railway station, bus terminal and airport while on division business. Note: Personal use of a taxi while on division business will not be reimbursed
    e. Charges for official long distance telephone calls when person called and need for call is indicated on the trustee's claim
    f. Parking charges when using a private automobile on authorized travel

Mileage

1. You are encouraged to utilize the most economical mode of transportation.
2. You must be reimbursed at the Division rate for kilometers driven in your private vehicle while traveling on Board or Division business.
3. Should you elect to drive rather than fly, your claim must be the lesser of:
    a. Divisional cost to fly as established from time to time, including travel to the airport, or
    b. Actual distance driven at the established rate per kilometer.

Approval of Accounts

All trustee accounts submitted for reimbursement shall be directed to the Associate Superintendent of Finance for review. If they are found to be within these guidelines, then the claim will be processed immediately. If you submit a claim that is outside of these guidelines, the Associate Superintendent of Finance will contact you to resolve the claim. If no resolution can be made, the matter will be turned over to the Board Chair who will bring the claim before the Board for resolution.

Trustee Compensation and Expenses

In accordance with the provisions of the *Education Act*, the Board deems it advisable to reasonably compensate and reimburse trustees for time and expenses incurred in functioning as trustees. Trustee remuneration recognizes the role and responsibilities undertaken by the collective board, individual trustees, and the time required in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The remuneration package offered for trustees is comprised of per annum honoraria, per diem honoraria for regular Board and ASBA meetings, and hourly honoraria for seminars/conventions/special committee meetings.

Trustee remuneration for performing their duties as members of the board will be determined from time to time by a majority vote on motions presented at a public meeting of the board; this will normally occur every other year.

Per annum honorarium are based on the following roles: Board Chair, Vice-Chair and Trustee.

Annual Honorarium for Trustees of the Fort Vermilion School Division			
	Effective December 1, 2011	**Effective September 17, 2013**	**Effective October 25, 2017**
Board Chair	**$9,600**	**$9,600**	**$15,000**
Board Vice-Chair	**$9,000**	**$9,000**	**$13,000**
Board Trustees	**$8,400**	**$8,400**	**$12,000**

* Reviewed September 2023, no adjustments were made.

Per Diem and hourly honorariums are based on the following roles: Board Chair, Vice-Chair and Trustee.

Per Diem Honorarium for Trustees of the Fort Vermilion School Division			
	Effective Dec 1, 2011	**Effective Sept 17, 2013**	**Effective Oct 1, 2023**
Board Chair	**$200.00**	**$225.00**	**$250.00**
Board Vice-Chair	**$175.00**	**$200.00**	**$250.00**
Board Trustees	**$175.00**	**$200.00**	**$250.00**

* Reviewed September 2023.

The hourly honorarium for the Board Chair and Vice Chair will be equal to the hourly honoraria established for trustees.

Hourly honorarium for all trustees is $25.00 per hour of the meeting attended to a maximum of eight hours a day.

The hourly honorarium for travel is $25.00 and is based on one hour per 100 km’s of driving distance to a maximum of 10 hours per day. The time will also be round up to the nearest hour. Example: If driving from High Level to Edmonton for a meeting the honoraria for travel would be 740 km’s (per division distance chart) divided by 100. This equals 7.4 but is rounded up to the nearest hour of 8.

You may claim for your attendance at the following meetings, when you are attending on Board business:

- Regular Meetings
- Special Board Meetings
- Board Approved Planning Meetings
- Board Committee or Alberta School Board Association (ASBA) meetings when Board Committee or ASBA Membership is Board Approved.
- Canadian School Board Association (CSBA) Conference
- Other FVSD activities/meetings (e.g., School Council meetings, Division PD days)

All other Board business must have Board approval to be eligible for remuneration.

For the purposes of, and in accordance with the Income Tax Act, total annual remuneration is comprised of 2/3 honorarium and 1/3 general expense allowance. The 1/3 general expense allowance is non-taxable and is intended to cover all incidental expenses you may be expected to incur in carrying out your responsibilities.

Your remuneration is paid monthly within three working days of the end of the month.

It is recommended that you submit remuneration claim forms on a monthly basis. All forms received five working days before the monthly payroll run will be paid in the month received. If the form is received later than five working days before the payroll run, then you will not be paid until the following payroll run.

All normal deductions will be deducted by the Divisions payroll administrator.

You may elect to take part in some or all of the Divisions benefit plans. If this option is chosen, it shall be for your term as a trustee and the cost of these plans will be paid by the Division. Voluntary Accident Insurance Plan will be provided as family coverage to a maximum of $250,000.00.

Board Development

The Board recognizes that in-service and orientation of individual trustees is a necessary aspect of the role of the trustee.

The Board will from time to time approve the annual maximum rate which shall apply to such attendance. You are able to access up to annual maximum value of $2,000 for individual professional development, as discussed above. This amount may be carried over one year. All expenses incurred by the Division for these events, including remuneration, will be applied to this maximum. When you begin to access dollars from this fund, the office of the Associate Superintendent of Finance will provide via monthly email an individual report of the balance remaining and an accounting of what has been spent.

FVSD Purchasing Card

You are entitled to a corporate purchasing card to use for school division business. This is arranged by the Associate Superintendent of Finance's office. You are required to provide a receipt for all purchases made on the purchasing card and must submit them to the Associate Superintendent of Finance's office on a regular basis. If you fail to submit the necessary information, the Associate Superintendent of Finance must provide to the Board Chair with information summarizing the outstanding account. The Board Chair must then resolve the matter with the Trustee.

You are provided with a purchasing card on the understanding that information to substantiate the charge must be provided in a manner that is acceptable to the Auditor.

Any purchases made of a personal nature (e.g., movies or other entertainment) should not be made on the purchasing card and will be invoiced back to you.

The following are examples of what the purchasing card may be used for:

a. Accommodations
b. Transportation, such as car rental or taxi

Legal Services

Legal advice is generally obtained through the office of the Superintendent/CEO. Trustees, as a corporate board, occasionally require legal opinions on certain matters. Coordination of these opinions should be assigned to the Superintendent/CEO who shall ensure trustees receive the requested information in a timely manner. As an individual trustee, you are not authorized to obtain legal information or opinions directly from the jurisdiction council.

Management regularly obtains advice on the day-to-day operation of the jurisdiction. General communication with legal council does not come before the trustees unless the matter is raised to the table or requires trustee guidance.

Employment Contracts

The FVSD is a large complex organization with many employees. Generally, employees fall within one of the following employment categories:

1. Teachers – unionized employees who have professional teaching certificates who are covered by the Alberta Teachers' Association Collective Agreement. Provisions of the agreement are governed by the *Education Act* and the *Labour Relations Code* of Alberta.
2. Support Staff – non-unionized employees who are covered by the Terms of Employment agreement. A committee of employees who represent all support staff bring forward requests for discussion. Generally, these discussions follow the teacher collective bargaining process.

3. Personal Service Contracts – are generally employees with management responsibility or who have access to confidential information and/or have critical positions to the jurisdiction. The Superintendent of Schools employment contract is negotiated directly with the Board of Trustees.
4. Contract Services – these are contracts created by the Division department when we are unable to provide the services needed. The Division will then contract this work out. These include maintenance jobs such as roofing projects as well as within the schools when a student physiatrist is required.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

School Councils are “structured groups of parents, principals, teachers, secondary students and community representatives who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning. They provide a means for members of the school community to consult with and provide advice to the principal and the school board.” [1]

The *Education Act* states that…”The school council may, at its discretion, advise the principal and the board respecting any matter relating to the school.”

The School Council Regulations state school council membership as:
7(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) in accordance with section 55(2) of the Act, parents of students enrolled in the school;
- (e) if an early childhood services program is offered at the school, parents of children enrolled in the program.

(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.

Due to the fact that teachers are members of the School Council, personnel issues would not be discussed at School Council meetings.

The School Councils Regulations state the responsibilities of board as:
12(1) A board must provide the school council with an opportunity to provide advice on the development of the school’s
- (a) foundation statements, if any, respecting the school’s vision, principles and beliefs,
- (b) policies,
- (c) annual education plan and annual results report required by the Minister to be reported under section 67 of the Act, and
- (d) budget required to be reported under section 139.

(2) A board must provide the school council with
- (a) the results for the school from provincial assessments and an interpretation of those results, and
- (b) the same information that the board disseminates to students, parents or electors under section 67(2) of the Act.

(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.

[1] School Council Resource Guide, Updated July 2023 available on Alberta School Council’s Association website

ALBERTA EDUCATION

Alberta's Education System

Everyone from parents, students, teachers, government and business has an important and cooperative role to play in education. Alberta Education works with its partners to build a learning system that meets the needs of our children. Annually Alberta Education approves a business plan which outlines goals for education.

School Jurisdictions and Boards

School Boards are made up of trustees elected during municipal elections. They serve four-year terms and are collectively responsible for ensuring that the students in their jurisdiction are provided with an education that is consistent with provincial regulations. School boards budget within their jurisdictions, and hire a Superintendent/CEO to supervise schools, manage teachers and administrators, and select optional programs to meet learner needs in their jurisdictions.

School Choice

In Alberta, parents and students can choose from a wide range of options when selecting a school. They can select from public schools, Catholic schools, francophone schools, private schools, and charter schools. They can also access a number of unique and innovative programs – including virtual schools. Parents can also opt to home school their children. Choice is one of the important principles Alberta's education system is built on.

School Councils

School Councils provide the opportunity for parents and the community to actively participate in their local school. These councils develop their own roles and function differently from one jurisdiction to another. Generally, school councils' input is sought in the decision making on school policies and goals.

Funding

The Government of Alberta is accountable for the equitable distribution of education dollars. The province's education system is funded largely through the collection of education property taxes and is divided primarily on a per-student basis. Every board receives the same amount per student for basic instruction. Additional funds are provided depending on specific student needs and other variables. Funding for school buildings is distributed through Alberta Education.

Curriculum

Alberta Education is responsible for determining what students are expected to learn from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The department works with its partners to design curriculum and provide authorized resources that meet the needs of learners and educators. Alberta Education also decides the amount of instructional time spent in each subject area.

Provincial Testing

Student assessment is a vital part of Alberta Education's efforts to ensure that students are receiving a high quality education. Grade 3 Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) are available to teachers as a tool to use at their discretion. The department conducts, achievement tests in Grades 6 and 9 and develops provincial high school diploma examinations.

School Facilities

Alberta Infrastructure is responsible for managing provincial school facilities capital programs, policies and regulations. Alberta Education and Alberta Infrastructure work with school boards in planning local capital plans and projects. This includes the development of provincial integrated capital plans and projects, and the management and implementation of approved capital projects. As well, Alberta Infrastructure develops and administers school facilities policies, regulations and the property management functions of Alberta's 1,500+ public schools.

Special Projects, Initiatives, and Reviews

To continually meet the different needs, interests and concerns of Albertans, Alberta Education sometimes undertakes special projects, initiatives and reviews. The department is also involved in a number of important cross-government efforts.

Technology in Schools

Technology is part of every student's basic education in Alberta. It's vital that learners are able to gain high-tech skills and knowledge of the future. In terms of curriculum, tools, and integration the province is a leader in this increasingly important area.

Alberta Education's partners in Kindergarten to Grade 12 education

Alberta Education delivers its programs in collaboration with partners. The ministry relies on the insight and expertise of its partners to provide the best possible service to Albertans.

For further information on Alberta Education check out their web site at www.alberta.ca/education

ASSOCIATIONS

The Fort Vermilion School Division is a member of the following associations:

- Alberta School Boards Association
- Alberta Home and School Councils' Association

Alberta School Boards' Association (ASBA)

The Alberta School Boards Association is a province-wide organization of locally elected school boards which offer school boards:

- The powerful advocacy opportunities that present themselves when school boards unite to lobby on behalf of the province's students and the communities they serve.
- Exclusive access to employee benefit and pension plans designed especially for school boards and their employees.
- Opportunities to network and learn at two annual meetings, regular Zone (regional) meetings, regular Zone (regional) meetings and provincial issues forums.
- Timely information about emerging trends in education.

Conferences

The ASBA holds their Annual General Meetings in spring and fall of each year. The spring meeting is held in Calgary and the fall meeting is held in Edmonton.

For further information on the ASBA check out their web site at www.asba.ab.ca.

Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA)

The ASCA is a provincial association for parents and community supporters who are committed to enhancing student success through meaningful involvement in children's education and schooling. Their members work to "positively" influence education at local (through School Councils), jurisdictional, and provincial (through ASCA) levels.

ASCA is a non-profit organization. Their membership consists mainly of school-based parent groups, who are represented through their School Councils. Membership is optional, renewed annually, and is held by the School Council, on behalf of all the parents of children attending that school. Individual parent memberships are also available. Aside from minimal staff, ASCA is run by volunteer parents, with Board representation from all corners of the province. Their office is located in the Alberta School Boards Association building in Edmonton.

Mission

ASCA will engage and empower Alberta school councils while advocating for the parent voice in the education system.