



# MEETING MINUTES

Elk Island Public Schools, in-person and virtual meeting  
Nov. 1, 2023 | 6:30 p.m.

Committee of  
School Councils

## In Attendance

### SCHOOL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

**Vice-Chair:** Dallas Kirtz, Fort Saskatchewan Elementary

**Secretary:** Chelsea Pretzlaw, Ardrossan Elementary

### SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Aileen Bozic, SCA Secondary  
Amy Prenc-Perry, Clover Bar Junior High  
Anne Wasylyshen, Ardrossan Junior Senior High  
April Childs, Lakeland Ridge  
Brian Vick, Brentwood Elementary  
Casey Albright, Fort Saskatchewan Christian  
Christan Rasmussen, Westboro Elementary  
Dawn Ferguson, Rudolph Hennig Junior High  
Janice Mills, Pine Street Elementary  
Kilby Ritchie, Wes Hosford Elementary  
Kim Scott, Salisbury Composite High  
Krista Scott, Bev Facey Community High  
Leanne Weiss, Woodbridge Farms Elementary  
Lisa Harke, SCA Elementary  
Marco Candia, Woodbridge Farms Elementary  
Shelley Romanyshyn, Win Ferguson Elementary  
Tawnia McQueen, Wes Hosford Elementary

### ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Cathy Allen, Chair  
Susan Miller, Vice-Chair  
Colleen Holowaychuk, Trustee  
Jacqueline Shotbolt, Trustee  
Trina Boymook, Trustee

### ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sandra Stoddard, Superintendent  
Ryan Marshall, Associate Superintendent  
Deneen Zielke, ATA Local No. 28 President  
Emma Small, Communication Services

## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

### AGENDA

COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz called for additions or deletions to the agenda.

MOTION | The agenda be adopted, as circulated.

*MOTION CARRIED*

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz called for approval of the Oct. 4, 2023, meeting minutes.

MOTION | The minutes be approved, as circulated.

*MOTION CARRIED*

## Board Report

Board Chair Cathy Allen presented the Board Report.

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Board Chair Allen stated one of the roles of the Board of Trustees is to advocate for public education. The Board creates an Advocacy Work Plan each year that identifies the priorities and strategies for this work. One aspect of this advocacy takes place in conversations with other elected officials and community stakeholders. During October, trustees had opportunities for conversation at the following events:
  - Sherwood Park Chamber of Commerce meeting
  - Vegreville Chamber of Commerce meeting
  - Meeting with Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaides and members of his team
  - Meeting with the Board Chair and Superintendent of Elk Island Catholic Schools
- The mandate letters for these Government of Alberta ministries helped inform the 2023-24 Advocacy Work Plan: Education, Advanced Education, Mental Health and Addictions, and Children and Family Services.
- The Division's assurance reviews provide the Board with the opportunity to see how departments and schools did in meeting their 2022-23 goals and priorities. These presentations include strengths and successes, areas for growth and challenges that were experienced.
  - At the end of October, trustees met with the following departments as part of the Assurance Review process: Business Services, Communication Services, Financial Services, Human Resources, Information Technologies, Student Transportation and Supports for Students. Through assurance reviews, areas of advocacy are identified, and the Board continues to refine the 2023-24 Advocacy Work Plan.

### COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Question:** When meeting with the education minister, what was your advocacy focus?

**Answer:** One, a way to fund Career and Technology Studies and Career and Technology Foundations programs rather than a weighted moving average. Currently, they're very costly opportunities for students. Two, Alberta Health Services (AHS) resources in rural areas. Resources would include different professionals, such as psychiatrists and therapists, in schools and at no cost to the AHS professionals.

**Question:** Is the advocacy plan for this year already made?

**Answer:** It's a working document, adjusted as needed, but big themes are available in the quarterly advocacy reports.

**Comment:** A COSC member said they're appreciative of the rural AHS resource advocacy initiative—it'd be a fantastic addition for rural schools.

# ATA Report

ATA Local No. 28 President Deneen Zielke presented the ATA report.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- On October 20, the provincial Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) held a political engagement meeting that Zielke attended. Points of discussion included the Take Back Alberta and 1 Million March for Children that protested lack of parental rights regarding instruction in schools, related to sexual education and LGBTQ2S+ topics in schools.
  - On September 20, protestors situated themselves outside and across the street from the provincial ATA office. Zielke stated that in addition to the inaccurate comments on signs they brought, several of them drove by shouting obscenities at counter protestors, such as "Don't f--- our children." They also tore down a pride flag that was hung in the office's car park—video was taken, and this act is being investigated as a hate crime.
- Zielke said the protest is disturbing on many levels:
  1. Protestors say it isn't about LGBTQ2S+ issues in school—it's about their rights to make choices for their children. However, the protest was focused on the LGBTQ2S+ community and the followup protest took place at the Pride Corner on Whyte Avenue.
  2. A lot of misinformation is being spread by this group. The health curriculum is a government document and educators are required to teach the curriculum. Additionally, in the [Education Act](#) it's the responsibility of school boards to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for students. Division [Administrative Procedure 205: Controversial Issues and Resources](#) and [Administrative Procedure 206: Human Sexuality Program](#) address this responsibility.
  3. David Parker the head of Take Back Alberta has a much bigger plan in mind. He has boasted how his party has taken control of 50 per cent of the United Conservative Party (UCP) Board of Directors seats and plans to take over the other half in the very near future at the UCP Annual General Meeting.
- Zielke stated the above is extremely concerning to families whose children are in public schools. Parker has openly talked about running Take Back Alberta members in school board elections so the values of this group can be imposed on superintendents. Superintendents who don't comply would be fired and replaced.
- If you have questions about gay-straight alliances and what Pride activities take place in schools, ask your administrator. The reality is that there are a lot of unsubstantiated claims and exaggerations used to instill fear in parents.
- The ATA is working on a strategy to engage members and prepare for the elections that will take place in spring 2025. Zielke urged COSC members to talk to the parents and caregivers at their schools, their friends and their families, encouraging them to research this group and if their values don't align, actively work to dispel the false information being spread. As a group, she asks families to be proactive in ensuring reasonable people who understand their role of providing a safe environment for all students continue to run for trustee positions, lend their support during their campaign and be an advocate for all students.

## For Information

### ASCA UPDATE – Dallas Kirtz, COSC Vice-Chair

- The Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) now has a [partner insurance program](#) available to all Alberta school-based fundraising associations.
- On November 18, ASCA is holding a [virtual engagement event](#) from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The event provides an opportunity to engage with the ASCA Board of Directors on topics of importance to school councils and their communities. Debbie Pushor will speak at the event. An online silent auction opens at 4 p.m.

## COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Comment:** Debbie Pushor was at the ASCA conference previously. She's a great speaker with interesting initiatives.

### CAREGIVER SERIES UPDATE – Dallas Kirtz, COSC Vice-Chair

- The [November Caregiver Series](#) schedule is now available.
- Offered through Alberta Health Services, the sessions are informative and valuable.
- COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz encouraged members to review the [November Caregiver Series](#) calendar.

### COSC OPERATING PROCEDURES UPDATES – Dallas Kirtz, COSC Vice-Chair

- There were no proposed changes to the [COSC Operating Procedures](#).

### SCHOOL COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT GRANT – Dallas Kirtz, COSC Vice-Chair

- On November 2, an application form for the School Council Engagement Grant will be sent to the email school councils provided in the contact form.
- The grant can be used for ASCA [learning opportunities](#), [support services](#) and [conference fees](#).
- School councils best know their individual school context, so that'll guide how they want to use their grant.
- After filling out the application, school councils must wait to receive approval from the COSC Chair. When they have approval, they can go ahead with their plans for the grant. Once approved, school councils will receive a final form to attach their invoice for payment or receipt for reimbursement from their grant activity. For more information on the grant process, refer to the [November COSC meeting package](#).

## New Business

### EIPS ASSURANCE REVIEW – Ryan Marshall, EIPS Associate Superintendent

- The EIPS Assurance Review framework considers:
  - Student growth and achievement
  - Learning supports
  - Teaching and leading
  - Governance
  - Societal context
- Assurance reviews monitor continuous improvement and whether schools and departments in the Division are meeting expectations.
  - These reviews evaluate the biggest strengths, greatest areas of growth, what supports are needed, and the biggest challenges during the last year.
- Engagement Process
  - **September:** Schools post School Education Plans and bring these to school councils.
  - **November:** Schools, parents and caregivers meet to discuss the assurance reviews.
  - **December:** Budget survey goes out to parents.
  - **January:** The Division's *Annual Education Results Report* is brought to COSC.
  - **February/March:** Review of school fees. Grades 4, 7 and 10 parents and caregivers fill out assurance surveys.
  - **May:** COSC is engaged about the budget and the [EIPS Four-Year Education Plan](#).
  - There are also ongoing and ad hoc engagements throughout the year. One example is the French Immersion engagement.
- Data Analysis
  - Associate Superintendent Marshall explained the difference between quantitative and qualitative data. The Division uses both.
  - This data provides a direction to go moving forward, in addition to trends compared to the province, locally and from year-to-year.

- Alberta Education Assurance Measures
  - Alberta Education looks at Provincial Achievement Test results, the number of Rutherford scholarships awarded, dropout rate and more.
  - These measures help create a report across the province.
- Assurance Review Question
  - How have you been provided opportunities to be involved in decisions about your child's education?

#### COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Question:** Which year of the *EIPS Four-Year Education Plan* are we in?

**Answer:** Currently in the second year.

**Question:** Should we be asking administrators for results prior to the assurance review? What is available to parents beforehand?

**Answer:** Ask for the data results package. You can discuss your school's education plan with administrators at school council meetings.

**Question:** Would it be helpful for parents to understand when engagement conversations are to happen? Could this be sent to school council chairs?

**Answer:** The [EIPS Four-Year Education Plan](#) has a formalized engagement plan. November and April are very important.

**Question:** How can we help get better qualitative data?

**Answer:** Parent engagement. Have conversations with your school councils. What does it mean to be involved in your child's education? Use language from the surveys to provide clarity for parents.

**Question:** Why is the assurance results review question from more of a personal parent perspective than a council perspective?

**Answer:** Superintendent Stoddard will clarify and restructure the question and send it to administrators. It should be from a school council perspective.

**Comment:** It's valuable for chairs to ask the administrators for broken down data about each question. This can be used for discussion topics at meetings.

**Question:** What was the impact on students when there were no diploma examinations? How did it affect post-secondary acceptance?

**Answer:** Standard of entry was higher. School-awarded marks are usually higher, so most students' marks were on the higher end, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-secondary institutions are starting to look at other ways to admit students than grades.

**Question:** Who should facilitate assurance conversations?

**Answer:** School council chairs and administrators when they're making agendas. Data is not a secret and should be shared with parents. Superintendent Stoddard will clarify this in the next leadership meeting. For example, school fees should be a robust conversation.

**Question:** Could EIPS come through with supports for councils? Such as how to run a meeting? A mentorship program? Some of the struggle with parent involvement is intimidation.

**Answer:** EIPS' vision is to collectively shift the culture to feel less intimidating. Administrators can also feel intimidated. Superintendent Stoddard will look into an orientation at the beginning of the year. Other options could include co-creating agendas at COSC for November and April.

# COSC Sharing

## SCHOOL COUNCIL ROLES – All COSC members

- Following the questions and answers from the assurance review presentation, COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz stated that everyone at COSC is there for the same goals—all of which centre around students. Even though being on school council can be intimidating, nobody knows everything and that's okay.
- COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz shared his council is newer and they're struggling to get volunteers. They're looking at Christmas event ideas, such as a movie. He asked what other school councils have done in the past or what they have planned for this year.
  - One COSC member said a vice-principal at their school started a student voice program, where students could have their opinions heard. It helps to shape the culture within the school. They said other school councils could ask administrators to implement this within their own schools.
  - Another COSC member added that if you get the students excited about an event, they'll bring their parents and caregivers.

**Question:** From the Board Highlights, I saw modular units are being destroyed with a site reclamation to follow at Westboro Elementary. Since the modular units are currently where the after-school programs are, will that change?

**Answer:** After-school programs will be moving into the school. The modular units are past their lifespan, and there are no capacity concerns.

**Comment:** A COSC member said they like the November and April agenda planning idea. COSC Vice-Chair Kirtz agreed.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:32 P.M.

## Next COSC Meeting

**DATE:** Jan. 10, 2024

**TIME:** 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** EIPS Central Services building, boardroom.