



# MEETING MINUTES

Elk Island Public Schools, in-person and virtual meeting  
March 6, 2024 | 6:30 p.m.

## In Attendance

### SCHOOL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

**Chair:** Kendra Roemer, Mills Haven Elementary

### SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Aileen Bozic, SCA Secondary  
Amanda Shand, École Parc Élémentaire  
Amy Prenc-Perry, Clover Bar Junior High  
Anne Wasylyshen, Ardrossan Junior Senior High  
Brian Vick, Brentwood Elementary  
Justina Gibson, Fort Saskatchewan Christian  
Kilby Ritchie, Wes Hosford Elementary  
Kim Scott, Salisbury Composite High  
Krista Scott, Bev Facey Community High  
Marco Candia, Woodbridge Farms Elementary  
Melissa Manolescu, École Campbelltown  
Sarah Witholt, Heritage Hills Elementary  
Tawnia McQueen, Wes Hosford Elementary (Interim Secretary)  
Teresa Bladon, Lakeland Ridge

### ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Cathy Allen, Chair  
Susan Miller, Vice-Chair  
Ralph Sorochan, Trustee  
Randy Footz, Trustee

### ELK ISLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

### GUEST SPEAKERS

Brandi Rai, President of the ASCA Board of Directors  
Wendy Keiver, ASCA Executive Director

## CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

### AGENDA

COSC Chair Roemer called for additions or deletions to the agenda.

MOTION | The agenda be adopted, as circulated.

*MOTION CARRIED*

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

COSC Chair Roemer called for approval of the Feb. 7, 2024 meeting minutes.

MOTION | The minutes be approved, as circulated.

*MOTION CARRIED*

# Board Report

Board Chair Cathy Allen presented the Board Report.

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- On March 3-5, the EIPS Board and senior administration attended the Alberta Rural Education Symposium. Everyone came away with an increased understanding of the complexities and benefits of rural education.
  - They had the opportunity to listen to the following keynote speakers:
    - Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis
    - Cadmus Delorme – former Chief of the Cowessess First Nation
    - Jordan Tinney – former superintendent of a school in Surrey, British Columbia, and a strong advocate for rural education
    - Ken Coates – an expert in rural community sustainability and economic development
  - They had lively discussion at their EIPS table around the following topics:
    - Strengths of rural school boards
    - Building advocacy for rural sustainability
    - Challenges for school boards—the increased mandate to provide additional supports for students and the communities
    - Opportunities for rural education advocacy
  - They heard from a panel of six high school students from three rural Alberta school divisions. They spoke of their deep appreciation for rural education, the challenges they’ve experienced, their preparation for post-secondary education, the opportunities for extracurricular school activities, and the strong relationships and sense of belonging they have in their schools.
  - Many rural communities in Alberta are looking at multiple strategies to increase economic development and attract new residents and entrepreneurs into their communities. They’re thinking creatively about programs to recruit and retain teachers and to provide career opportunities for the young adults who leave their rural communities to obtain post-secondary education.
- Board Chair Allen also shared a Board Mythbuster fact shared in February:
  - Section 58.1 of the current *Education Act* requires school boards to notify parents and caregivers when courses, programs of study, instructional materials, instruction or exercises contain subject matter that deals primarily with human sexuality. Included in this notice is always an opportunity for parents and caregivers to opt out of the instruction without any academic penalty to the student. It’s a practice that’s been in place since 2014, and one that EIPS has consistently followed.

## COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Question:** What are the challenges rural schools face?

**Answer:** Transportation—they have a hard time keeping bus drivers. Students go to school on alternate days. School and municipalities need to work together to bring prosperity to improve the draw to rural areas and advocate to the provincial government.

**Question:** The Board Highlights indicated a joint meeting with Elk Island Catholic Schools. This is interesting as parents want to know why more isn’t collaborated.

**Answer:** We do like to collaborate so that common advocacy pieces get a bigger emphasis when bringing it to the municipal government. It gives us a greater voice but not as much with the provincial government.

**Comment:** Considering 80 percent urban and 20 per cent rural—rural schools face different challenges than urban, and if COSC members have ideas on how they can be supported, COSC Chair Roemer suggested posting them on the [COSC Facebook page](#).

# ATA Report

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

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- On February 8 and 9, EIPS teachers attended their annual teachers' convention and the response from attendees was very positive. Many enjoyed the keynote speakers, sessions on artificial intelligence and others specific to program areas. The Local was pleased to host EIPS trustees and senior administration that were able to attend the Partners in Education Luncheon. The speaker, Cadmus Delorme was very engaging and his message regarding reconciliation and the path forward was inspiring. Zielke especially connected to his comment that no one living in Canada now had anything to do with the treaties, residential schools and other repressive programs, but we have inherited the outcome. We can work together to understand and move forward.
- On February 9 and 10, Zielke attended a meeting of ATA Local Presidents and learned more about ATA President Jason Schilling's meetings with the Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis regarding the social studies curriculum, teacher retention, sustainable funding, the effect on students after recent announcements on parental rights and transgender students, and more.
- On March 4 and 5, Zielke attended the ATA's Political Engagement Seminar.
  - Attendees heard from Nathan Cooper, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, regarding legislation and the passing of bills.
  - Attendees also heard from a panel of public-school trustees regarding their experiences and concerns with Take Back Alberta targeting school board elections to control superintendents and push their parental rights and regressive LGBTQ2S+ agenda. As well, it was noted that the provincial government is looking to legislate political party affiliations in municipal politics. One trustee noted that they work for the children—all children—and this should not change regardless of your personal political affiliation.
  - As well, attendees heard from the ATA economist regarding the budget. Several key points:
    - In advance of the provincial budget the ATA released their [pulse survey results](#) regarding class size and supports, in addition to Statistics Canada information, finding that education in Alberta is the lowest funded in the country. Albertan education needs \$1.2 billion to reach the Canadian average and \$600 million to reach mid-level.
    - \$394 million announced to operational spending; however, will not notice it as enrolment growth this year was up 3.6 per cent or 28,000 students.
    - \$246 million increase of 3.6 per cent to instructional funding, but assumption is there will be an offset of decreases in grants to fund it, which the public won't know until the provincial government's funding manual is released.
    - 4.4 percent overall increase, with a 15 per cent increase to private schools.
    - \$72 million increase to transportation of 15.2 per cent. Zielke believes this is for private schools.
    - \$20 million increase of 2.7 per cent to operations and maintenance.
    - \$34 million increase of 2.3 per cent to support special needs—improvements to program unit funding could be connected.
    - 43 new school and school modernizations—12 get construction funding, 15 get design funding, 10 get planning funding, and unclear about the other 10.
    - Real spending per pupil is down 13 per cent over 6 years.
    - Provincial government borrowed money to balance the budget.
    - Tax cut will likely come just prior to next election.
  - Finally, attendees heard from Graham Thomson, a political journalist. Several key observations he shared include:
    - Premier Danielle Smith is not a social conservative—she pivots to stay in power.

- David Parker of Take Back Alberta worked for Stephen Harper and Jason Kenny. He's a very successful organizer and took out Kenny at the leadership review by mobilizing members, since Premier Smith brought forward legislation that he fought for regarding parental rights. He's now getting his members to support her Alberta Pension Plan.
  - New Democratic Party leadership—Kathleen Ganley (Calgary), Rakhi Pancholi (Edmonton), Sarah Hoffman (Edmonton) and Jodi Calahoo Stonehouse (Edmonton)—have announced candidacy. Naheed Nenshi (Calgary) was just announced—the membership deadline is April 22. The vote is June 3-22.
- Zielke stated that the political climate is getting very interesting and a lot of what's happening is not good for students or public education. If a good portion of the population remains apathetic, she fears we won't be able to correct damaging decisions being made.

## For Information

### CAREGIVER SERIES UPDATE – Kendra Roemer, COSC Chair

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

### CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH – ALBERTA – Kendra Roemer, COSC Chair

- COSC Chair Roemer discussed [Canadian Parents for French – Alberta](#)—a non-profit organization that furthers bilingualism by promoting opportunities to learn and use French for all those who call Canada home. On the website, you can find events, programs and resources geared to students, families and educators.
- She asked COSC members to share their experiences with these resources on the [COSC Facebook page](#).

### EIPS ANNUAL FEEDBACK SURVEY: FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS – Ryan Marshall, EIPS Associate Superintendent

- EIPS Associate Superintendent Marshall asked for COSC members help with promoting the EIPS Annual Feedback Survey: For Parents and Caregivers. He encouraged members to talk about the survey at school council meetings, parent-teacher interviews and other relevant events.
- The first part of the survey is about your child and their school, and you can fill it out for each student you have. The second part is for the whole Division and only needs to be completed once. Results from this survey drive decisions that are made.

**Question:** Have you done an FAQ with five or so points that we could share with our school communities?

**Answer:** No, but EIPS could look at doing that.

**Comment:** Thank you for hyperlinks to topics we can talk about and initiate in our schools to impact growth and equip us. It's a really good move.

**Question:** Which survey was the one that looked at “Don't know” responses as a negative? Was it this survey?

**Answer:** No, that is the [Alberta Education Assurance survey](#) so when we look at those results, we must be mindful of that. The numbers could be broken out.

## New Business

### WHAT ASCA DOES FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS AND RESOLUTIONS FOR THE AGM – Wendy Keiver, ASCA Executive Director, and Brandi Rai, President of ASCA Board of Directors

- Keiver thanked COSC members for having Rai and herself at the meeting.
- Keiver shared how the [Alberta School Council's Association](#) (ASCA) supports school councils in the province.

- She toured the [ASCA website](#) focusing on many topics that can be found in the search menu.
  - **Workshops**
    - Includes important learning opportunities and workshop schedule.
    - During the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop model was changed to virtual and when provincial government funding was cut, ASCA went to scheduled times for workshops.
    - School councils can request an in-person workshop but would also have to pay transportation costs for the instructor.
    - Workshops are eligible for \$500 coverage from the Alberta School Council Engagement Grant.
  - **Support Services**
    - ASCA can help with specific situations, such as updating operating procedures. These services can be purchased individually.
  - **Self Directed Learning Modules**
    - Modules are offered with support or independent learning.
    - The modules focus on creating school council plans.
  - **Division Wide**
    - Resources and training can be provided to multiple school councils in a school division at once.
  - **Newsletters (ENews)**
    - Can share ASCA newsletters with your school community.
    - Emails are sent once a month except September and around the ASCA Conference. More are sent during these times.
    - **Action Item:** The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is coming up. Anytime you have a new school council chair, ensure you notify ASCA.
  - **ASCA Conference**
    - The Conference takes place April 26 and 27. It's the 95th year so it'll be festive.
    - The keynote speaker is Barbara Coloroso who will discuss raising ethical kids.
    - Justice David Hancock, former member of the legislative assembly of Alberta and former interim premier, is speaking on the value of parents engaged in students' lives.
    - The Education Minister will be taking questions. Attendees can submit questions to ASCA ahead of time. The Education Minister will choose which questions to answer.
    - Fundraising sessions will be offered on the Friday.
  - **Fundraising Support**
    - ASCA also offers support to fundraising societies for a fee.
- Rai discussed the ASCA AGM and the association's advocacy work.
  - The AGM will take place on April 28. The meeting helps school council members understand their role, learn how to advise locally and encourages participation.
  - Parents and caregivers have a valuable perspective and insight on their children.
  - The advocacy initiatives are selected during the AGM. AGM documents can be viewed on the [ASCA website](#). Be sure to register for the meeting to vote on the advocacy resolutions.

#### COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Question:** Workshops are not enticing to purchase for our school council. Would you consider offering more workshops of interest, such as one regarding artificial intelligence?

**Answer:** We're not experts so we wouldn't be offering those topics, but we could look at third parties to facilitate.

**Question:** Are the Self Directed Modules priced per school council?

**Answer:** Yes, the price is for one school council.

**Question:** What is the time to complete the Self Directed Modules?

**Answer:** It's to be completed over a six-week period, which allows two weeks to get the tasks completed for each module.

**Question:** How are you choosing questions for the Education Minister?

**Answer:** His office will be selecting the questions to answer from those submitted.

**Question:** Do we have to attend AGM?

**Answer:** On April 28, you can attend in person or virtually. The AGM Package explains how to participate. Typically, ASCA has a deadline for advocacy resolutions in January; however, emergent resolutions must meet the criteria and can be submitted as late as the morning of the AGM. Voting and nominations for the ASCA Board of Directors will take place at the meeting. Brandi Rai has been the President for eight years, so her time is complete.

**Question:** Will Brandi Rai be staying on as an advisor?

**Answer:** Brandi has offered to stay on for a year.

**Question:** How do you settle first time nerves at the AGM?

**Answer:** You are okay to do it on your own. Extroverts will get scooped up. The ASCA Board of Directors is there to help and support you, and Jacquie Surgenor, an EIPS parent and experienced ASCA Conference and AGM attendee, has volunteered to support new school council representatives.

**Question:** Has there been talk of the \$500 Alberta School Council Engagement Grant being axed?

**Answer:** It's staying this year as far as we know and then we will have to wait for Alberta Education's Funding Manual for the 2024-25 school year.

## COSC Sharing

**OPEN FLOOR FOR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS** – All COSC members

- Kudos that the Education Minister will be at this year's ASCA Conference.
- Dislike that the Education Minister isn't taking questions from the floor. Funding for ASCA is gone—this would allow parent engagement in education and an opportunity to notice culture of parent engagement.
  - Parents don't have the opportunity to ask pointed questions and see the authentic reaction.
- School councils have a vote to take back to the table and have robust conversations about the advocacy resolutions.
  - It's a good thing to disagree.
- COSC member Krista Scott is open to helping facilitate questions and how to approach the AGM.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**Comment:** ASCA is having a golf tournament—individuals are invited to attend in support of ASCA.

**Suggestion:** If your school council doesn't think an advocacy resolution is beneficial to your school, ask your council what could change that would make it a positive for your school. Some rural communities have a 90-minute bus commute—what'd make it beneficial for everyone?

**Comment:** School councils can use the School Council Engagement Grant for ASCA workshops or support services, such as redoing school council operating procedures.

**Question:** When will the descriptions of breakout sessions for the ASCA Conference be released?

**Answer:** Depends on the presenters but hoping Easter or week of April 1.

**Question:** How many people are the EIPS Board sponsoring for the 2024 ASCA Conference and AGM?

**Answer:** Have eight out of nine spots filled currently. Someone is emailing about the last spot right now. As it's up to a maximum of \$5,000 and the cost of attendance is \$500 plus GST, the Board is sponsoring nine school council representatives this year.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:20 P.M.

## **Next COSC Meeting**

**DATE:** May 1, 2024

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

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