



**Alberta  
School Councils' Association**

## PARENT OF DISTINCTION AWARD

*Individuals who demonstrate ability to promote parental involvement in the education system, are exceptional in their dedication and initiative, are dynamic leaders and who create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all partners in education.*

ASCA is proud to recognize the following **2011 Parent of Distinction Award** recipients:

Kim Bender	Calgary
Shyla Masse	Edmonton
Noreen Forsythe	Redcliff
Tanya Wurzer	Coaldale
Dale Lehr	Medicine Hat
Magda Mahler	Jasper
Treena Pasichnuk	Manning
Serena Shaw	St. Albert
Marla Hope-Rapp	Coalhurst
Kelcey Walker	Coalhurst

## School Councils Connection 2011



*Minister of Education, Honourable Dave Hancock speaks at the ASCA Conference.*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our recent School Councils Conference reflected the concept of "shift". "Shift" represents the need to alter our thinking about education and our attitude of what future graduates need to enable them to be ethical, entrepreneurial, and critical in their thinking. The Minister of Education has urged us to think about many aspects of our education system, including the need for greater parental and community engagement.

The conference and AGM brought school council representatives together from across the province to celebrate, deliberate and share how school councils and parents continuously add value to and strengthen the public education system in Alberta.

Saturday opened with the Minister of Education, Honourable Dave Hancock speaking to the delegates - some 300 parents, principals, superintendents, trustees, education partners, MLA's and Alberta Education personnel. The Minister spoke about the value of the voice of parents and school councils. He also indicated a need to start teaching students in a different way, in light of "twenty first century learning" and transformational changes in education.

I want to extend special thanks to the many school council delegates, education partners, session presenters, guests, entertainers and ASCA staff who made the weekend event so successful.

Our AGM was full of lively, respectful debate and resolutions were passed that will become advocacy policy statements of ASCA to be reflected in committee work. The AGM saw the election of the Board Directors, Vice President and President. I offer my thanks to those completing their tenure on the board and for their dedication to students and education at the provincial level. This includes Ron Smith, Kim Kartushyn, and Ashna-Rawji-Ruchkall. Four returning directors, Brad Vonkeman, Tasha Schnidel, Lorraine Forsen, and Lynne Kaiser are joined by two new directors, Lesli Solomon and Colleen Knechtel, who will continue the role of promoting and supporting school councils in public education. Supporting effective school council practices and demonstrating how parental engagement can enhance school improvement strategies, and ultimately student success, is the underpinning of all ASCA efforts.

Thank you for your continued support and all that you are doing to change the face of Alberta education for the better. Our accomplishments are making a difference for our schools and students.

On behalf of the ASCA board, I wish you and your families a safe and enjoyable summer!





## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

This edition of the ASCA News highlights the excitement, sharing and learning that went on a few weeks ago at the ASCA School Councils Connection conference and AGM. Take a moment to look through the photos - they attest to the enthusiasm, lively debate and networking opportunities throughout the event. Of note, in attendance were forty school trustees at the event this year - an all-time high for school board trustee involvement (many of them accompanying school council parents) and we are pleased trustees have an interest in the work of school councils. In addition, twenty seven representatives from education organizations attended - presidents, vice presidents, executive directors and Alberta Education personnel. We also had more central office personnel, principals and teachers attending this year - also very positive to see the support and interest of education professionals.

Congratulations to all ASCA 2011 award winners! *Parent of Distinction* Awards and *School Council Awards of Merit* are being presented in communities around the province. I would like to add my personal congratulations to the two superintendents who were honoured at the conference banquet: Dean Lindquist, Superintendent of Schools for Grande Yellowhead Public Schools received the *Friend of ASCA* award for his support of ASCA and school council effectiveness, and Brian Callaghan, Superintendent of Schools for Canadian Rockies Public Schools was honoured with the *ASCA President's Award*, for his leadership in fostering and supporting parental engagement in Canadian Rockies school communities.

In other news, **Bill 18, Education Act** was introduced by Minister Hancock in late April. The Bill, the result of months of consultation through *Inspiring Education* and subsequent submissions by Albertans, education stakeholder organizations and others, has received first and second reading in the Legislature. The Bill is now out for public input and will likely receive third reading in the spring of 2012. (*see more on the Education Act on pages 6, 7*)

ASCA has taken a hard look at Bill 18 and the clauses that will impact parents and/or school councils and have included information in this issue and postings on our website. A link is provided to the Alberta Education website page that solicits response to various aspects of Bill 18. We encourage you to take a look at this draft legislation and make your views known - you can help shape the legislation that will guide the future of Alberta's education system.

It has been our pleasure to serve you and your school council this past school year. As the final months of the school year wind down, we wish each of you the very best summer and look forward to serving you in the new school year.

*Michele*

## TEACHING EXCELLENCE

ASCA is proud to support the *Excellence in Teaching Awards* to recognize outstanding contributions in the education of Alberta's children. *Congratulations* to all nominees for their dedication, commitment and investment in students!

## PARENT PERSPECTIVES

We encourage parents to share personal stories, points of view, or opinions relevant in the education of children, or experiences of school council successes and challenges for feature articles in the ASCA news. Please submit *Word* documents (*may be subject to editing*) by email to [jolainek@albertaschoolcouncils.ca](mailto:jolainek@albertaschoolcouncils.ca).

### ASCA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2011 - 2012

*President*     **Marilyn Sheptycki**     Calgary     *Vice President*     **Brad Vonkeman**     Red Deer

#### *Provincial Directors*

<b>Lorraine Forsen</b>	Cayley	<b>Lynne Kaiser</b>	Sherwood Park
<b>Munira Manji</b>	Fort McMurray	<b>Rhonda Schumm</b>	Spruce Grove
<b>Shari Robertson</b>	Bowden	<b>Lesli Solomon</b>	Tofield
<b>Tasha Schindel</b>	Calgary	<b>Colleen Knechtel</b>	Edmonton
<b>Joy McGregor</b>	Slave Lake		

## SCHOOL COUNCIL AWARD OF MERIT

*Recognizing effective school council practices that have an identifiable impact on supporting student learning and school improvement at the school, division or provincial level. Congratulations to the 2011 award recipients!*

### Springbank Middle School

*Calgary, Rocky View Schools*

This school council utilizes a forward thinking philosophy. Springbank Middle School Council embraced the Alberta Education *Inspiring Action* position paper and incorporated it into teachings for parents. The council hosted a full day parent education workshop in 2010 and 2011, that had over 55 parents in attendance for each event. During the course of the event(s), parents learned about 21st century technologies, digital “netizenship”, the developing “Teen-Tween” brain, and other cutting edge topics relevant to the 21st century learner.

### Ecole Dickinsfield School Council

*Fort McMurray Public School*

École Dickinsfield School Council has an innovative approach and various techniques of training for parents. The council utilized the teachings of Steven Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* as part of their philosophy. The council was also an integral part of developing the Annual School Growth Plan and prepared a school council growth plan that aligned with the School Growth Plan. The school council initiated and supported the School Literacy Week and are creating the “Leader in Me” program to support student behaviour, citizenship and achievement.

### Whispering Hills Primary School

*Athabasca, Aspen View Public Schools*

Whispering Hills School Council was selected due to their commitment to following the strategies of Joyce Epstein’s *Framework of Six Types of Involvement*. It is with these effective practices that have resulted in an increase in parental engagement within the school. The school council initiated the “Whispering Hills Welcome Fair”. The Fair was unique in format as it included not only the school, but the community as well. The initial Fair in 2009 attracted over 300 people and the September 2010 Fair had over 500 people in attendance. The parents, students, staff and community members were able to interact and share in a safe, inclusive environment.



**ASCA Board of Directors** (left to right)

*Back row; Lesli Solomon, Rhonda Schumm, Brad Vonkeman, Tasha Schindel, Shari Robertson.*

*Front row; Munira Manji, Marilyn Sheptycki, Lynne Kaiser, Colleen Knechtel, Lorraine Forsen. (missing Joy McGregor)*



Some 300 delegates including parents, principals, superintendents, trustees, education partners, MLA's and Alberta Education personnel attended the 2011 Conference and AGM in Edmonton.



The event brings school council representatives together from across the province to celebrate and share school council experiences and strengthen public education in Alberta.



Minister of Education, Honourable Dave Hancock speaks to the assembly (*above*) at the Saturday morning opening and takes time to answer questions.



Delegates took part in a shared learning exercise (*left*), selected from a variety of workshop sessions to attend, and gathered education information at the Resource Gallery (*below*).





Brian Callaghan, Superintendent of Canadian Rockies Public Schools, received the ASCA 2011 *Presidents' Award* (left).



Entertainment to set the mood, jazz pianist and sax player (above), and Improv theatre (below).

*Friend of ASCA* award recipient, Dean Lindquist, Superintendent of Grande Yellowhead Public Schools and ASCA President, Marilyn Sheptycki (above).



ASBA Executive Director, David Anderson and ASCA Life Member, Trina Boymook (above).



Alberta Education personnel Maureen Melnyk, Doug Coffin and Rick Hayes with Michele Mulder, ASCA Executive Director (left to right).



Lively debate, discussion and member voting at the ASCA Annual General Meeting.



John Rymer, with Alberta Education presented on *Demystifying Assessment* at the AGM (below).



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: THE EDUCATION ACT

## Parents and Students

### *Who may access an education in the K-12 system in Alberta?*

Under the proposed Education Act, every person who at September 1 a year is six years of age or older and younger than 21 years of age who is a resident of Alberta and has a parent who is a resident of Canada is entitled to have access to an education in Alberta.

### *Who must attend school in Alberta?*

Under the proposed Education Act, every person who is a resident of Alberta, has a parent who is a resident of Canada, and is six years of age or older at September 1 in a year and younger than 17 years of age must attend school in Alberta. The proposed Act will raise the compulsory age of attendance for Alberta students from 16 to 17 years which, along with the raised age of access, will encourage more Alberta students to complete their high school education.

### *How do I know where my child can go to school?*

Under the proposed Education Act, residency will now be determined by where the student lives, as opposed to the present situation where residency is determined by where the student's parents live. This change will create a more student-centered system and enhance student access to a funded education. It remains up to school boards to determine school boundaries.

### *Does the proposed Education Act set out expectations for students and parents?*

Yes, under the proposed Act student responsibilities include actively participating in their learning and in the learning of those around them. Student responsibilities will focus on the pursuit of their own educational success. The new responsibilities also emphasize that students are expected to contribute to a caring, respectful, and safe environment.

Defining parental responsibilities recognizes the crucial role that parents play in their children's education and supports greater cooperation and communication between parents and school personnel. The proposed act states that parents have the responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children and to play an active role in their child's educational success.

### *What will a safe, respectful and caring environment mean for my child?*

The proposed Education Act places an emphasis on caring, respectful and safe schools. School boards will be required to establish, implement and maintain policies necessary to provide a caring, respectful and safe environment for all students and staff. Boards will need to address bullying behaviour both in and outside of the school and share their policies with students, teachers, and parents. As a result, Alberta's schools will be more able to respond to bullying and to promote the best possible environment for students to succeed.

### *Will student transportation be affected by the new Education Act?*

Under the proposed Act, school boards will have greater flexibility in determining the transportation needs of students. This will allow boards to be more responsive to the needs of their community when determining how best to provide safe and appropriate transportation. Specific requirements, including the 2.4 km walk distance, will no longer be legislated.

### *What is an inclusive education system?*

In an inclusive education system, we create an educational environment where each and every student can find success and receive a quality education. In each school staff will, working together with parents, determine the best placement for the student. Where it is determined by a board that a student's behavioral, intellectual, learning, communications or physical characteristics, or a combination of any of these, impair the student's ability and opportunity to learn, the student is entitled to specialized supports and services in an education program.

### *How is Early Childhood programming changing?*

The proposed Education Act outlines certain provisions that apply to a 'student' which apply to a child enrolled in an ECS program. These provisions include: the establishment and maintenance of a student record, the parent's right to appeal to the board regarding the child's programming, and the parent's right to request a Ministerial review regarding the specialized supports and services being offered.

### *What minority rights are protected in the Education Act?*

The proposed Education Act confirms the Government of Alberta's commitment to a publicly funded education system that provides a choice of educational opportunities to students and that through the dimensions of public, separate and Francophone schools, honours the rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Canada in respect to minority language (French or English) and minority denominational (Protestant or Roman Catholic) education.

### *Can I continue to home school my child?*

Yes. There have been no changes to the section on Home Education in the proposed Education Act.

### *Will charter schools continue to be one of the educational choices available to parents and students?*

Yes, charter schools will continue to be a part of the educational choices in Alberta. The proposed Act provides criteria for the establishment of charter schools, expands who may establish them and provides that the Minister may by regulation establish criteria by which a charter may be issued on a permanent basis.

### *What impact will the new Education Act have on private schools?*

Private schools will continue to be part of the educational choices for parents and students in Alberta.

## The proposed Education Act will emphasize the responsibilities of students, parents and school boards.

**Bill 18, the Education Act**, was introduced in the Alberta Legislature on April 27. The proposed legislation will underpin the transformation of the education system to reflect expectations for high school completion, online and other flexible learning environments and a wide range of supports to students.

If passed, the Education Act will replace the School Act, which is the legislative framework that currently guides the governance of education in Alberta. The last major changes to education legislation were to the School Act in 1988. Government actively engaged Albertans in discussions about the future of education through several key initiatives: *Inspiring Education: a Dialogue with Albertans*, *Inspiring Action*, *Setting the Direction* and *Speak Out*. Each initiative has contributed to the ongoing transformation of Alberta's education system and informed the development of the Education Act.

The Act is not expected to be passed in the spring legislative session, allowing it to be held over for further discussion by education stakeholders and other Albertans. An online engagement forum ([www.education.alberta.ca/engage](http://www.education.alberta.ca/engage)) will complement stakeholder meetings, ensuring Albertans can continue to contribute to the conversation about educational transformation.

### **Highlights of the Education Act focus on student success:**

- Increases the age of access to 21, allowing students more time to graduate.
- Raises the age of compulsory attendance to 17 from 16 years to encourage more students to complete their high school education.
- Articulates responsibilities for students, parents, school boards and trustees.
- Requires school boards to ensure a caring, respectful and safe environment that addresses bullying and discrimination, in school, outside of school and online.
- Describes the provision of specialized supports and services, recognizing that the needs of all students will be met within a single inclusive education system.
- Enables more flexible learning opportunities and supports for students by providing school boards with natural person powers.
- Removes specific requirements related to the transportation of students allowing boards to be more responsive to the needs of their community when determining how to best provide safe and appropriate transportation to their students.
- The proposed Education Act updates processes for establishing separate school districts, clarifies definitions of independent and resident students, and outlines expectations surrounding education services agreements for First Nations students. It also provides criteria around the establishment of charter schools, expands who may establish them, and provides for regulations to establish criteria by which a charter may be issued on a permanent basis.

For more information on the proposed Education Act, visit the Alberta Education website at [www.education.alberta.ca/educationact](http://www.education.alberta.ca/educationact).

**Congratulations** to Magda Mahler (*second from left*) of Jasper, presented the 2011 Parent of Distinction Award by ASCA Director, Rhonda Schumm (*left*). Also pictured, Nominator Traudi Golla, School Council Chair and Jasper Elementary School Principal Raymond Blanchette-Dubé (*right*).



## SCHOOL COUNCIL PLANNING

Some simple planning in the spring ensures your school council is ready for action when school starts in September.

A great beginning starts with considering the following before ending the year:

- Create a plan for recruitment and promotion to put in place for early in the new school year.
- Provide information for parents in the school community on the work of school councils and the particular focus of your council.
- Plan to attend the school Open House, host a family BBQ early in the new year or be on site to welcome parents and students back on the first day of classes.
- Consider booking a Fall presentation on **Effective School Councils** or a workshop such as **Roles and Responsibilities of School Councils**.

ASCA staff are available to facilitate a “planning evening” - to help your council create a plan for the Fall, or with hosting a parent information session at your school.

There are many opportunities for your school council to connect with the school community and help parents understand the vital role they play in the education of children. Have a plan in place to make it happen!

For more ideas, or to book a planning facilitator, presentation or workshop, contact the ASCA office.



*Congratulations* to Treena Pasichuk (right) of Manning, presented the 2011 Parent of Distinction Award by ASCA Director, Lynne Kaiser (left).

## MEMBER CONTACT

As more communications become digital, including our newsletter, education bulletins and requests for participation, it is critical that ASCA maintain direct email contact information with school councils in Alberta.

We ask that you send us updated contact information whenever possible, and as often as necessary, to ensure our digital distribution list is correct and that vital information is not missed by your school council. Assistance from school board district offices for up to date school council contacts in their area is requested as well.

Please visit our website, for a **Contact Information Form** or email [alisonf@albertaschoolcouncils.ca](mailto:alisonf@albertaschoolcouncils.ca) directly with contact information.

## AGM 2011

Policy statements affirmed at the 2011 AGM:

### 11-1 *Achievement Test Writing for Cycled Curriculum*

That Alberta Education redefine directives for testing in order to allow all students to write the grade 6 and 9 Science and Social Studies provincial Achievement Tests during the year the cycled program of study is delivered, (Social Studies and Science), regardless of registered grade to better accommodate students in multi-grade classrooms.

### 11-2 *Fair and Equitable Funding for Transportation*

That Alberta Education provide adequate funding for transportation to all school districts to get students to school in a reasonable amount of time.

### 11-3 *Technology Support for the 21st Century Learner*

That Alberta Education continue to provide technology funding for hardware and software and in addition, provide technology funding for technical support and learning support in addition to the current basic per student grant.

## JUNE IS...

**National Aboriginal Awareness Month**

**June 21 is National Aboriginal Day**

Alberta School Councils  
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