



**Date:** January 29, 2025 **Agenda Item:** 8.5

**To:** Board of Trustees

**From:** Shawna Warren, Superintendent

**Originator(s):** Jonathan Konrad, Deputy Superintendent, Education Services

**Subject:** **Council of School Councils’ Summary Report - October 2024 Meeting**

**Background:**

The Council of School Councils (COSC) serves as an informal gathering of school council chairs and/or vice-chairs to facilitate communication, build connections and share information between school councils, the Board of Trustees and the Division’s administrative team. The October 23, 2024, meeting provided a platform for meaningful discussions on engagement strategies, fostering respect, celebrating successes and addressing challenges within school councils.

Overview of Parent Feedback:

- **Engagement:** Clear communication, personal invitations and inclusive events such as assemblies and casual gatherings strengthen participation.
- **Respect:** Parents value visible follow-up on concerns and genuine collaboration.
- **Challenges:** Misunderstandings about school council roles and logistical concerns like playground maintenance and screen time were noted.
- **Successes:** Councils are building positive school environments through recognition events and improved communication.

**Status & Relationship to Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS):**

This report aligns with the [SLOS](#) in the following way:

**COMPETENCY:** (1) Building Effective Relationships

**INDICATORS:** e. establishing constructive relationships with students, staff, school councils, parents/guardians, employee organizations, the education ministry and other stakeholder organizations; and

f. facilitating the meaningful participation of members of the school community and local community in decision-making.

**COMPETENCY:** (7) Supporting Effective Governance

**INDICATORS:** k. supporting the board in its engagement with the school community to develop a vision of a preferred future for student success; and

I. facilitating ongoing public communication about the board's operations and the achievement of its goals and priorities.

**Governance Implications:**

Education Act

School council

55(1) For each school operated by a board, a school council must be established in accordance with the regulations.

Policy 225: Role of the Board

The Board of Trustees believes that school councils provide valuable advisory assistance to the school principal and to the Board [Education Act s.55, the School Councils Regulation, and the Alberta School Councils Resource Guide]. Specifically, the Board:

11. Meet at least annually with the Council of School Councils or School Council Chairs.

Administrative Procedure 211: School Councils

5. A Council of School Councils (COSC) provides an opportunity for the Division's school council membership to meet and share strategies and experiences. COSC enables effective communication among the School Councils, the Division, the Superintendent and the community. As per Board Policy 225: Role of the Board, COSC will meet at least once annually.

Administration is prepared to respond to questions at the January 29, 2025, Public Board meeting.

**Attachment(s):**

1. Summary of Questions and Comments from COSC – October 23, 2024



## Summary of Questions and Comments from COSC – October 23, 2024

The evening's discussions provided valuable insights into how School Councils can build engagement, foster respect, celebrate successes, and address challenges. Below is a summary of key themes and takeaways.

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### 1. Recognizing the Purpose and Impact of School Councils

Parents emphasized **clear, consistent communication** and engaging strategies:

- Relentless outreach through grade reps, teachers, and social media.
  - **Visible, accessible information:** updates in newsletters, pre-shared agendas, and meeting summaries posted online.
  - Innovative ideas like **infographics** and child-friendly meetings (e.g., bringing kids along).
  - Personal recognition of parent contributions fosters a sense of value and purpose.
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"A personal email invite makes all the difference."

### 2. Opportunities That Foster Parent Engagement

What keeps parents engaged? Meaningful **connections** and impactful opportunities:

- Feeling heard and involved through **information exchange** and open dialogue with teachers and staff.
- Positive shifts post-COVID, with parents welcomed back into schools.
- Events like **assemblies**, food trucks, and casual "pop-ins" allow for relationship building.
- **Clarity in asks** (time commitments, specific roles) and personalized invitations encourage participation.

"Bring kids to meetings so parents will come too!"





### 3. Fostering Mutual Respect

“Close the loop ‘I hear you, what do you need from us?’”

Parents value respect when:

- Conversations lead to **visible actions and follow-ups** (“close the loop”).
  - Communication methods improve, ensuring transparency and inclusion.
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- **Authenticity** and genuine collaboration occur, especially on challenging topics.
  - Consistent efforts to make everyone feel welcome and essential to their child’s education.
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### 4. Successes to Celebrate

- Councils are fostering positive school environments: assemblies (e.g., 7 Sacred Teachings awards) and parent involvement in activities.
- Successes like parent-friendly events and stronger council communication were highlighted.

“Assemblies where every child gets recognized bring parents in and build connections.”

### 5. Challenges Faced by School Councils

Key obstacles identified include:

- **Misunderstanding of roles:** Parents often confuse School Councils with fundraising groups (e.g., “Pancake Breakfast” association).
  - Overemphasis on **fundraising efforts** detracts from advocacy and the Council’s broader purpose.
  - Concerns over issues like **playground maintenance** and practices such as screen time during lunch, which may impact student well-being.
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### Key Takeaway

The discussions revealed parents’ desire for **authentic partnerships** and clearer distinctions between fundraising and School Council roles. By fostering mutual respect, amplifying communication, and celebrating successes, councils can drive greater impact and purpose.

